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A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Crumb

'Vol 18'

The Yellow Moon of Andalusia^a.

Eine kleine Mitternachtsmusik^b.

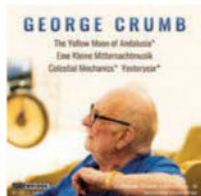
Celestial Mechanics^c. Yesteryear^d

^{ad}Tony Arnold ^{sop abd} Marcantonio Barone ^{pf}

^dDavid Nelson, ^dWilliam Kerrigan ^{perc}

^cQuattro Mani

Bridge © BRIDGE9476 (68' • DDD • T/T)



It has been George Crumb's good fortune to possess both potent genes and a fertile

imagination; his myriad beneficiaries include generations of musicians and listeners.

Now 88, the American composer continues to explore sonic possibilities in works of surprising and enchanting content, as this recording – Vol 18 in Bridge's Complete Crumb Edition – illustrates so generously.

Three of the four scores are 21st-century creations, while the fourth, *Celestial Mechanics*, is the 2012 revised version of a work Crumb composed in 1979. Each piece calls for different vocal and/or instrumental forces, and each shows Crumb's mastery of tone colour, imagery and ethereal sound worlds. Two works, *The Yellow Moon of Andalusia* ('Spanish Songbook III') and *Yesteryear*, highlight the composer's versatile combination of voice and instruments. The former, set to six poems by Federico García Lorca, places mezzo-soprano – or, as performed here, the radiant soprano Tony Arnold – and amplified piano in haunting evocations of the texts, with the singer joining in the instrumental activity on a variety of percussion. In *Yesteryear*, a quote from François Villon is the catalyst for a glistening vocalise featuring mezzo-soprano (Arnold) with amplified piano and two percussionists.

Thelonious Monk's 'Round Midnight' was the inspiration for *Eine kleine Mitternachtsmusik*, 10 animated and reflective movements for piano with nods to Debussy, Richard Strauss and others; Marcantonio Barone plays them with exceptional urgency. Perhaps most

GRAMOPHONE talks to ...

Laura Ward & Suzanne DuPlantis

The co-directors of Philadelphia-based Lyric Fest on their debut album of songs by Daron Hagen



left to right: Joseph Gaines, Justine Aronson, Laura Ward and composer Daron Hagen

How did this project come about?

Lyric Fest has been commissioning composers for 12 of our 15 years. As a prolific song composer, Daron was always on our radar. In 2013 he composed *After Words* for our 'Winterreise' project, celebrating our 10th-anniversary Season of Journeys. He then composed a fantastic set of Emily Dickinson songs – we commissioned one song as part of a multi-composer American Women Poets in Song project, and he delivered four! These works were the catalyst for this recording, and how wonderful that all of these pieces are from the 21st century. Daron also has Philadelphia ties, as he was trained at Curtis and studied with Ned Rorem.

Can you describe the music's qualities?

Daron has an innate understanding of the voice, setting lyrics beautifully and with a clear love of words. He enters the world of each poem and captures its essence through

music of clarity and strength. He gets to the heart of poems through strong human emotions – smart but not cerebral.

It sounds like this is particularly rewarding music to perform.

Absolutely. Daron is a pianist and definitely writes pianistically. He uses the keyboard so well through different colours and textures, highly aligned with each poem. His music lies really well under the fingers.

Do you have any further recording plans?

Future recordings in the works include music by Kile Smith, Benjamin CS Boyle and a second album of Daron's music.

remarkable is the revised *Celestial Mechanics*, subtitled 'Cosmic Dances for Amplified Piano, Four Hands', which shows Crumb at his most luminously imaginative, and which Quattro Mani (Steven Beck and Susan Grace) perform for all of the score's mystical beauty. **Donald Rosenberg**

Franck • Griffes • Scriabin

'Sounds of Transcendence'

Franck Prélude, choral et fugue **Griffes** Piano Sonata, A85. The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, A72 **Scriabin** Piano Sonata Op 7, 'White Mass', Op 64. Énigme, Op 52 No 2. Fragilité, Op 51 No 1. Valse, Op 38. Vers la flamme, Op 72

Reed Tetzloff *pf*

Roméo © 7323 (72' • DDD)



Charles Tomlinson Griffes and the painter Mary Cassatt are the two most noteworthy

Impressionists America produced. Yet Griffes's now century-old masterpiece, the formidable Sonata, is rarely encountered in concert and represented by fewer than 20 recordings in current catalogues. Reed Tetzloff, the 25-year-old Minneapolis native who makes his impressive solo recording debut here, has not only exhausted every implication of this enigmatic work but seems delighted



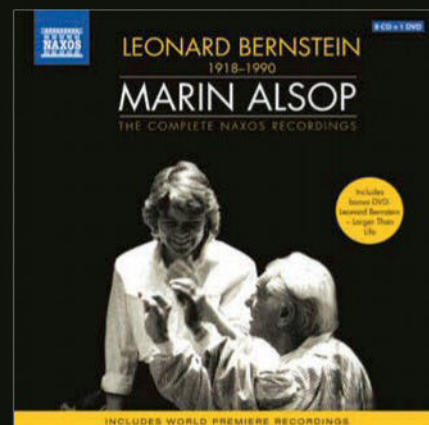
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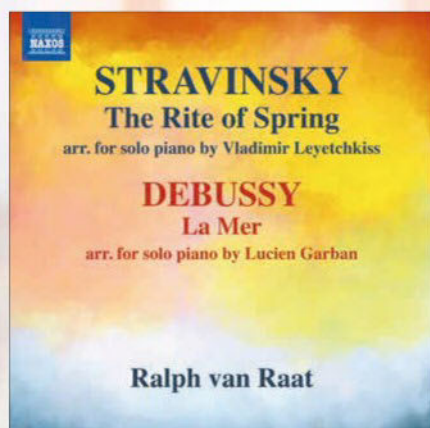
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Mara Gibson employs an array of techniques and a variety of sonic approaches in music mostly inspired by poetry and paintings

to share his discoveries. Rhetorical aptness is front and centre in the sonata's first movement, as Tetzloff negotiates Griffes's luxuriously sensual harmonic syntax with a sure sense of direction. The mysterious, dreamlike tranquillity enveloping the slow movement is deeply affecting. But it is mere prologue to the culminating *Allegro vivace*, which evokes an apocalyptic vision with stunning clarity and disarming spontaneity. The more familiar *Pleasure Dome of Kubla Kahn* exhibits a similar identification with Griffes's idiom. But the Sonata is the greater achievement and ranks easily with the recordings of Garrick Ohlsson and Stephen Beus as the finest available.

The well-chosen Scriabin group flows seamlessly from the perfumed salon atmosphere of the 1903 A flat Waltz to the heady symbolism of *Vers la flamme* from 1914. 'Fragilité' showcases Tetzloff's refined touch and the Seventh Sonata exemplifies his ability to elucidate formal structure within heavy harmonic overgrowth. But I found myself returning with relish to the Op 38 Waltz, where Tetzloff perfectly captures an overripe *fin de siècle* insouciance, poised just this side of trashiness.

After the colour-drenched extravaganzas of Griffes and Scriabin, Franck's *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue* seems almost chaste. Kaleidoscopic colours are exchanged for fervent rapture in a performance that, while not as unmistakably French as, say, Bertrand Chamayou's, carries the day with its sincerity and the sheer beauty of its

musicality. As remarkably developed as Tetzloff's gift is, it also suggests even greater things to come. **Patrick Rucker**

Griffes Piano Sonata – selected comparisons:

Oblson (6/13) (HYPE) CDA67907

Beus (HARM) HMU90 7476

Franck – selected comparison:

Chamayou (9/10) (NAIV) V5208

Gibson

Blackbird^a. Conundrums^b. Folium Cubed^c.

One Voice^d. Sky-Born^e. Spark^f

^aMegan Ihnen *mez* ^cZachary Shemon *sop sax*

^fJoDee Davis *tb* ^eSamuel Huang, ^eElaine Ng *vns*

^dMichael Hall *va* ^eEsther Seitz *vc* ^bHolly Roadfeldt,

^fTrevor Thornton, ^eEmily Trapp *pf* ^eUKMC

Conservatory Singers; ^aCascade Quartet

Navona © NV6128 (57 • DDD)



Mara Gibson writes music filled with all manner of images and associations. The

repertoire on this recording was mostly inspired by poetry and paintings, though the results are rarely slavish in depicting specific events or atmospheres. What binds these pieces are Gibson's concise handling of musical materials and her spectrum of sonic approaches.

The disc's namesake, *Sky-Born*, is a compact evocation of Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem 'Music' scored for four singers (sung here by eight), two violins

and cello. The vocal lines take flight over pizzicato strings, the text's myriad references to birds deftly suggested. Paintings by Jim Condrón are the source for six short piano preludes, *Conundrums*, that convey the anxieties of the title in various wisps and torrents of sound. Holly Roadfeldt is the vivid pianist.

Gibson also reveals her experimental bent in *Blackbird*, suggested by Wallace Stevens's poem 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird', through the spirited and moody interactions of a string quartet (in this performance the vibrant Cascade Quartet). *Spark*, for trombone and two pianists, explores various heightened emotional states, while *Folium Cubed* presents a soprano saxophone (Zachary Shemon) teasing the ear through an array of techniques.

Hannah Ensor's poem 'Breath' kindled an inventive response from Gibson. She set the verses for mezzo-soprano and a viola player who shares in recitation duties. It is titled *One Voice*, which is reflected in the seamless interweaving achieved by the fine collaborators (mezzo Megan Ihnen and viola player Michael Hall). **Donald Rosenberg**

Hagen

After Words^a. Songs of Experience^b.

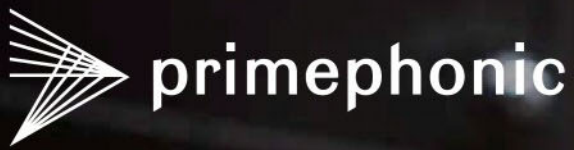
Phantoms of Myself^c. Four Irish Folk Songs^d.

Four Dickinson Songs^e

Lyric Fest ^aJustine Aronson, ^dKelly Ann Bixby,

^cGilda Lyons *sops* ^dSuzanne DuPlantis *mez*

^aJoseph Gaines *ten* ^bDaniel Teadt *bar* Laura Ward *pf*



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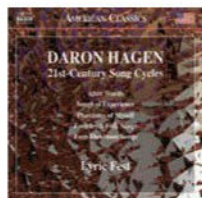
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(74' • DDD • T/t)



Daron Hagen was Ned Rorem's first composition student at the Curtis Institute

during the early 1980s and this collection of song-cycles written since the turn of the century show his mentor's influence in the way he attends to each word in each line. As performed here it also harkens back in time to when Schubert heard his songs at intimate gatherings of friends and colleagues.

The magic starts with the first and longest track, the first of six songs that make up his multilingual *After Words*, in which Justine Aronson and Joseph Gaines engage in an imagined conversation inspired by Schubert's *Winterreise* on the nature of art and love. Along the way Hagen casually evokes sexy hints of Schubert, Broadway and serialism, before the music bursts into innocent lyrical love. There are similarly striking tracks and moments throughout the recital, as when Gilda Lyons leans into poet Susan Griffin's battlecry 'I wake thinking of myself as a man', which will rouse anyone who happens to be listening unawares.

There is no let-up in quality with the *Four Dickinson Songs*, where Hagen catches the sparkle in each poem, including an extraordinary 'Wild Nights', and delivers its punchline with a musical solution that turns out to be unexpected – and right. The *Four Irish Folk Songs* briefly suggest Britten's folk-song settings but focus more on richness than purity. Hagen's florid setting of 'Danny Boy' as sung by Kelly Ann Bixby and Suzanne DuPlantis is quite sublime. **Laurence Vittes**

Mozart

'16 Sonatas for Violin and Piano (complete)'

Violin Sonatas – No 17, K296; No 18, K301; No 19, K302; No 20, K303; No 21, K304; No 22, K305; No 23, K306; No 24, K376; No 25, K377; No 26, K378; No 27, K379; No 28, K380; No 32, K454; No 33, K481; No 35, K526; No 36, K547

Tomas Cotik *vn* **Tao Lin** *pf*

Centaur (M) (4) CRC3619/22 (4h 28' • DDD)

Mozart

'Sonatas and Variations for Piano and Violin, Vol 2'

Violin Sonatas – No 24, K376; No 25, K377; No 27, K379; No 33, K481

Jacques Israelievitch *vn*

Christina Petrowska Quilico *pf*

Fleur de Son (M) FDS58040 (74' • DDD)



The joyful virtuosity and stylish musicianship that Tomas Cotik and Tao Lin brought to their superb cycle of Schubert's violin-and-piano works for the Centaur label happily permeate their cycle of Mozart's sonatas. There are so many delightful details to savour that one hardly knows where to begin. The *Andante* of the A major Sonata, K526, is a good starting point. Lin sets a walking, animated pace that contrasts with the slower, monumental tempo Barenboim and Perlman (DG) favour, allowing Cotik to shape Mozart's melodic lines in long breaths, adjusting his tone for harmonic and dramatic emphasis.

Whereas Barenboim and Perlman handle the *Andantino* of the F major, K547, with gentle care, Lin and Cotik are quicker and more exuberant; note their dazzlingly matched embellishments and runs. The *Allegro con spirito* of the D major, K306, sounds unusually grand and orchestral in concept, which may be due to the resonant, somewhat diffuse engineering. While Lin and Cotik don't lean into the second subject, the pianist keeps the energy up by way of effectively petulant bass-note accents. Conversely, the Rondo of the C major, K296, takes deft and light-hearted wing, like veteran actors who know just how to throw away a good line.

Apropos of acting, the G major, K301, tellingly exemplifies the pair's gifts for bypassing their respective instruments in order to create character. Cotik first understates the main theme, then balances the Alberti bass accompaniment in perfect proportion with Lin's melody and bass line. The duo make slight yet galvanising accelerations once the dotted rhythms kick in, underlining Mozart's change of mood without labouring the point. The movement's remainder continues to hold interest through similar inflections and dabs of colour. In this sense, the interpretation differs from Arthur Grumiaux's fuller-bodied classic recording with Clara Haskil (Decca); here the violinist unabashedly struts his elegance. All told, a most rewarding Mozart cycle, notwithstanding my sonic reservations.

Clearer, more detailed engineering graces the second instalment of a Mozart cycle from Jacques Israelievitch and Christina Petrowska Quilico. In July 2015 the duo presented a marathon concert at

the Chautauqua Festival in Virginia devoted to the complete Mozart sonatas. A few months earlier the violinist had been diagnosed with lung cancer, to which he succumbed on September 5. Despite his struggle, the duo managed to complete their cycle. With that in mind, there's nothing remotely tentative about Israelievitch's focused tone, cultivated phrasing and flexible ensemble interaction. Although the piano is the dominant instrument throughout most of these sonatas, Israelievitch often appears to assume the lead. Take the Menuetto of the F major Sonata, K377, where Quilico plays the theme simply and plainly. Yet Israelievitch enters and the theme gains considerable profile and shape.

The same thing happens in the *Andante* of the F major, K376, where Israelievitch's offhand legato and minute portamentos add expressive dimension. This is not to slight Quilico's accomplishments at all; for instance, her strong, dynamically contrasted pianism in the *Adagio* of the E flat Sonata, K481, underlines the music's operatic nature. Indeed, I look forward to this series' remaining volumes. **Jed Distler**

Pender

Five Dances^a. Kimchi Dreams^b. Lyric Set^c. Suite^d. Toccata^e. Variations^f

^dNicholas Fitton // ^dNiall Casey, ^fMargaret Herlihy

^{ab} ^bWelly Shay, ^{bd}Brian Tracey ^{cl} ^cPhilip Kolker,

^aDillon Meacham, ^aJonathan Nitz, ^{ad}Hanul Park ^{bn}

Alex Carlucci ^b^{bn} ^c^{cbn} ^dJenny Smoak ^{hn} ^fRob

Haskins, ^cScott Pender ^{pf} ^ePowell Flute Quartet

Navona (C) NV6127 (59' • DDD)



Florida-born, DC-resident Scott Pender (b1959) is nothing if not a

composer for the recording age. And a prolific one, at that. His earliest impetus for music came from his parents' record collection, 1960s pop music and film scores, church hymnody and organ music, followed by composition studies with Jean Ivey at the Peabody Conservatory and Gavin Bryars in the UK.

Pender's talent for melody has been much commented on by critics and is much in evidence in this jovial collection of six works. Sometimes Pender's tunefulness can descend into mawkishness, as once or twice in *Kimchi Dreams* (2013) for the unusual trio of two clarinets and bassoon, inspired by the aftermath of 'a large, late Korean dinner'. Such whimsicality is a recurrent theme, even in so straightforward a work

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Ye-Eun Choi Frank Huang
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Cinematic approach: Manfred Honeck and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra bring drama and urgency to Shostakovich

as the Variations for oboe and piano (2010), a tapestry of allusions to other composers and styles composed with a delightfully straight face.

With five separate players, the bassoon features prominently – most brilliantly in the solo *Lyric Set*, with piano accompaniment, and concluding Five Dances for three bassoons and contrabassoon (2011), a combination worthy of Gordon Jacob. Its ebullient sequence of ‘Canon’, ‘Country Dance’, ‘Stomp’, ‘Steps of Two’ and ‘Backbeat’ is most appealing and the sonic opposite of the four flutes of the delightful early Toccata (1989), composed in the same year as the weightier Suite for wind quintet, though given here in its 2013 revision, but still light in expression.

The recordings are as varied in date as the works, ranging from 1992 (Toccata) to 2016 (*Lyric Set*). Shaun Michaud’s mastering is very fine. None of this is great music, for sure, but all of it is superbly performed and the result is rather fun. **Guy Rickards**


Shostakovich • Barber

Barber Adagio for Strings^a

Shostakovich Symphony No 5, Op 47^b

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra /

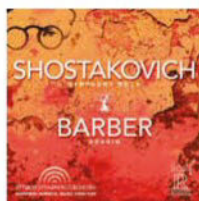
Manfred Honeck

Reference Recordings ©  FR724SACD

(60’ • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at Heinz Hall, Pittsburgh,

^b June 7-9, ^a October 11-13, 2013



Shostakovich’s music abounds with ambiguities and coded references that beckon

to us to read between the lines. In the Fifth Symphony, art and politics are so entangled that extramusical speculation is unavoidable. Yet what is the practical, interpretative effect of our conjecture? As for the symphony, the only significant point of textual contention concerns the final pages and whether the printed metronome mark of crotchet=188 should actually be quaver=188, as on Mravinsky’s 1938 recording and later corroborated by Shostakovich’s son, Maxim. Otherwise, though, the score is clearly notated, down to subtle details of pacing. If we trust the composer to have communicated his subversive intentions so artfully, do we really need to second-guess him?

Manfred Honeck seems intent on wringing every last drop of drama from the symphony in this live recording. He seizes upon the first movement’s stark juxtapositions. Rhythms in the jagged opening phrases are razor-sharp and urgently dispatched – though at a speed considerably faster than the composer’s metronome mark – then the pace eases as the mood becomes more lyrical. The tempo careens back and forth like this, highlighting the character changes,

although the result sounds more like a film score than a coherent symphonic essay.

In the Scherzo, Honeck again characterises vividly but is freewheeling with the text, adding a slew of heavy accents that have an effect akin to rough jabs to one’s ribs. Isn’t the music’s Mahlerian bite – as Shostakovich notated it – sufficiently vicious? And then, when Shostakovich does indicate accents later in the movement, they don’t stand out. The *Largo*, however, is beautifully done. Honeck’s cinematic approach is touchingly effective here, with the opening section unfolding in long, flowing phrases, like a slow-sweeping panoramic shot. The finale packs a powerful sonic punch, thanks to impassioned playing by the Pittsburgh Symphony and stellar, rumble-the-floorboards engineering. Still, Andris Nelsons, in his recent DG recording (also live), is generally more faithful to the score while maintaining a tighter grip, and Haitink’s intense sobriety (Decca) remains a benchmark.

On paper, following this with Barber’s *Adagio for Strings* might appear anticlimactic but on disc it’s convincing. Barber’s idiosyncratic nod to Tudor polyphony – Honeck writes that he transferred vocal-style phrasing from the composer’s choral version – serves as a elegiac yet soothing benediction. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Shostakovich – selected comparisons:

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Concertgebouw Orch, Haitink (12/82[®], 11/93)

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Pictured: Cecilia Bartoli (Decca/© Uli Weber/St Petersburg 2014) who featured on the November 2014 cover of Gramophone. Full annual retail price for print only (13 issues) is \$136.50; print only annual subscription, Digital Edition and reviews Database (\$94); Digital Club (\$130); Gramophone Club (\$168). Postage and packaging is not included for overseas orders. Overseas subscription p&p: Europe \$28.99 Rest of World \$35.75. If you have a subscription enquiry then please email subscriptions@markallengroup.com

Young artists changing the way we hear music

In his feature about Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Andrew Mellor recalls her appearance at the *Gramophone* Awards in 2012. There have been many memorable performances at our annual event, but this is one that seems to get mentioned to me more than most. Perhaps this is because it was the first time many present had seen or heard (or even heard of) her. Which would have mattered little if the performance hadn't been quite so compelling: it thrilled, fascinated and stuck in the mind. Just as music-making should do. At any rate, it paved the way nicely, if coincidentally, for Kopatchinskaja to win Recording of the Year 12 months later. And it means that every time a new recording by her is released, we (and I hope you too) greet it with intrigued anticipation. Her recordings haven't all been acclaimed in our pages, but then artistry which seeks to challenge and explore afresh will often divide opinion. Her new disc, 'Deux', is triumphantly true to what she stands for. If, at *Gramophone*, one of our aims – I'd argue responsibilities – is to champion the younger artists really setting out to rethink and shape the way we hear music, then I can think of few musicians more worth celebrating than Kopatchinskaja.

It doesn't stop there. Last issue's Recording of the Month was an extraordinary release by conductor Teodor Currentzis of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6, the *Pathétique*. A musician who single-mindedly sets out to reconsider how music – whether orchestral or opera – should be heard and recorded, it's no surprise that he's also a collaborator of Kopatchinskaja's. What unites them both is just how strongly they embody the



Mellor

belief that all musicians should hold, that the 'classics' are not mere pieces of the past, but works of today, to be heard anew and afresh in the 21st century.

In a different sort of way, it's also wonderful this month to see another artist we've championed – Igor Levit, 2016's Recording of the Year recipient – honoured by one of the most prestigious (and valuable) of grants offered by the music world, the Gilmore Prize. His playing is just as revelatory as that of Kopatchinskaja and Currentzis, but in a different way: less shock and surprise, more a sense of reflective insight and a convincing feeling that it's exactly how the music should be played. The sort of sense one gets from, say, a Murray Perahia recording: only, remarkably, from someone aged just 30.

Of course, while celebrating the ideas of (relative) youth it's vital – in music, and generally – to guard against dismissing the wisdom and insight brought about by age and experience. Thankfully, however, music is one field where the art of our elders is rightly respected and revered, and also one where those very grantees are so often passionately committed to supporting the journeys of their successors.

The artists named above are just a few of the many who are shaping music-making for the future. They are all already famous, but we're also committed to highlighting those at an even earlier stage. You may have noticed our reintroduced One to Watch column these past few months: I hope that some of the artists featured will be those we can look forward to gracing *Gramophone's* cover in the years ahead.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'I don't need much prompting to spend time with Mariss Jansons, the finest orchestral conductor we

have,' says **MICHAEL MCMANUS** who writes this month's feature on the maestro. 'As he approaches the middle of his eighth decade, his music-making has lost none of its energy, but it continues to deepen.'



'Violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja is both a dream and a nightmare to interview,' says **ANDREW MELLOR**, who

met her during recent recording sessions. 'What's certain is that she's a phenomenon, one of the most significant classical musicians alive who has much to tell the world – with or without her instrument.'



'Long associated with a single Soviet virtuoso, Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto feels differently iconic

these days,' writes **DAVID GUTMAN**. 'It has become core repertoire and, as I found when writing this month's Collection, it inspires committed advocacy worldwide, not least from today's younger players.'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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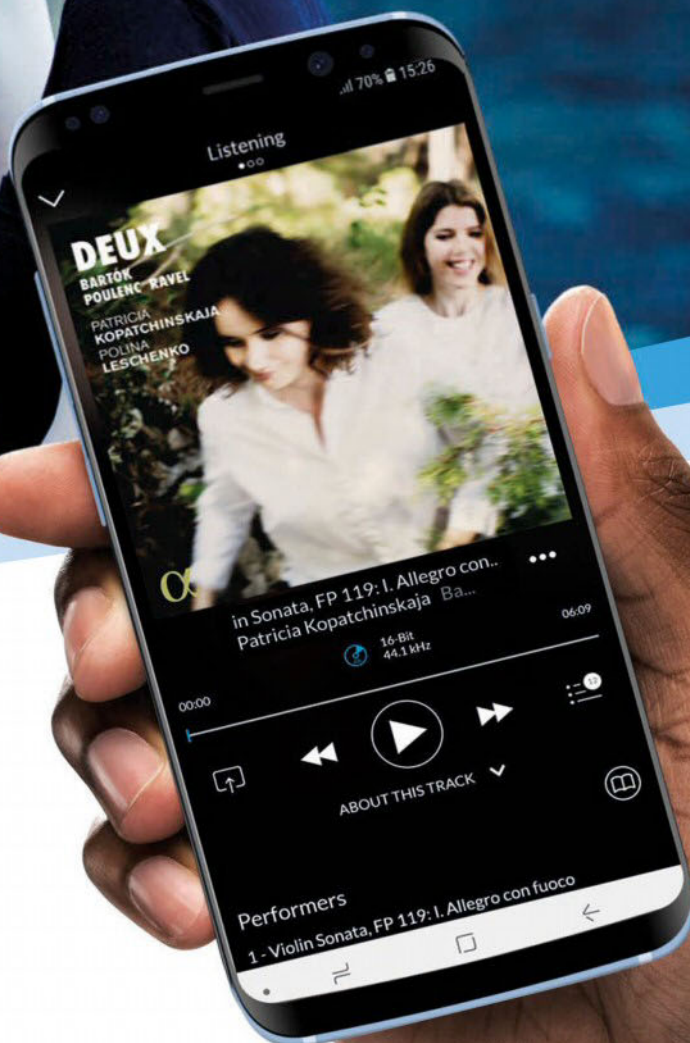

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Photo : Patricia Kopatchinskaja & Polina Leschenko © Juilia Wessely

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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



STRAVINSKY

Works for Two Pianos
Marc-André Hamelin, Leif Ove Andsnes *pfs*
Hyperion
► **DAVID FANNING'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 26**

Even on paper – Hamelin, Andsnes, Stravinsky's *Rite* – this sounded thrilling. In the hearing it surpasses even those expectations; characterful, virtuoso, collaborative – and hugely impressive.



MOZART Piano
Concertos Nos 25 & 27
Chamber Orchestra of Europe / Piotr Anderszewski *pf*
Warner Classics

Piotr Anderszewski's previous two Mozart concerto discs have made for fascinating listening, and this pairing of Nos 25 and 27 is no exception.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 32**



SHOSTAKOVICH
Piano Concerto No 1.
Symphony No 9
Martha Argerich *pf*
Sinfonia Varsovia / Alexandre Rabinovitch
Fryderyk Chopin Institute

Every Martha Argerich release seems to add more excellence to one of the most impressive of all artist discographies.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 36**



VIVALDI. JS BACH
Works with Recorder
Stefan Temmingh *rec*
Capricornus Ensemble
Basel
Accent

Joyful, graceful and skilful – and presented in a thoughtful context – Stefan Temmingh's playing of these Vivaldi concertos is an enjoyable triumph.

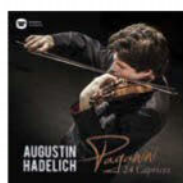
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 41**



'DEUX'
Patricia Kopatchinskaja
vn Polina Leschenko *pf*
Alpha
Patricia Kopatchinskaja never fails to engage

both the listener's ears and mind with performances of personality that make scores live as if freshly discovered. Leschenko is the perfect partner.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 49**



PAGANINI
Caprices for Solo Violin
Augustin Hadelich *vn*
Warner Classics
Augustin Hadelich – newly signed

to Warner Classics after building a well-received catalogue of albums on Avie – turns his attention to the fiendish Paganini Caprices, and excels.

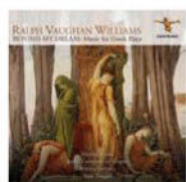
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 59**



CPE BACH. JC BACH.
JS Bach Magnificats
Soli; Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen
Hyperion

This family affair makes for some interesting comparisons – but most of all for some predictably superb music-making from the ever-impressive Arcangelo and Jonathan Cohen.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 64**



VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
'Beyond My Dream'
Britten Sinfonia / Alan Tongue
Albion
'An essential

acquisition for every RVW aficionado', concludes our reviewer Andrew Achenbach of this lovingly produced, enterprising release.

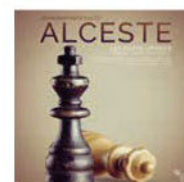
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 72**



HEGGIE Great Scott
Joyce DiDonato *mez*
Dallas Opera Orchestra / Patrick Summers
Erato
Perceptions of Jake

Heggie's music was the subject of Edward Seckerson's inaugural column for us last year; here's a chance – which he urges you to take – to experience it for yourself.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**



LULLY Alceste
Soli; Les Talens Lyriques / Christophe Rousset
Aparté
Rousset in Rameau

was our Recording of the Month in November; if anything he's even more attuned the to rhythmic and dramatic impulse of Lully's music. A very fine recording.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 88**



DVD/BLU-RAY
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV The Tale of Tsar Saltan
Soli; Mariinsky Orchestra / Valery Gergiev
Accentus
A traditional staging, fine cast and excellent playing – Valery Gergiev adds another impressive recording to his growing Rimsky-Korsakov catalogue, and this time on film.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
EILEEN JOYCE
'The Complete Studio Recordings'
Decca Eloquence
A complete celebration

of the art of this extraordinary pianist: all her studio recordings, well presented.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 60**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

FOR THE RECORD

Igor Levit receives 2018 Gilmore Artist Award



Pianist and former *Gramophone* Recording of the Year Award-winner Igor Levit has been named as the recipient of the 2018 Gilmore Artist Award.

The prestigious Award – worth \$300,000 – has a track record of honouring some of today's most brilliant and interesting pianists, ones who combine virtuosity with individuality and a questing musical mind. Awarded every four years, the most recent winners were Rafał Blechacz in 2014, Kirill Gerstein (2010) and Ingrid Fliter (2006), all of whom have achieved acclaim for their subsequent achievements. Levit, however, is arguably much better known than any of those three previous recipients were at the time of their Award; signed to Sony Classical, he received *Gramophone*'s Recording of the Year Award in 2016 for his recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* and Rzewski's *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!*

In reviewing that release, *Gramophone* critic David Fanning captured some of the elements that the Gilmore Award defines itself as seeking: 'Certainly he can muster all the athleticism, velocity and finesse of a competition winner ready to burst on to the international scene. But like the rarest of that breed – a Perahia, say – his playing already has a far-seeing quality that raises him to the status of the thinking virtuoso.'

Gilmore recipients are chosen following assessment by an anonymous, six-member Artistic Advisory Committee who hear the nominees in numerous performances under varying conditions. Candidates for the Award are unaware that they are under consideration.

Daniel R Gustin, Director of the Irving S Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, which gives the prize, described Levit as 'not only a superb pianist but also a deeply thoughtful and insightful artist, and he made a deep impression on all of us who followed his performances over the last three years. He exemplifies the pianist that The Gilmore was formed to support.'

New Year's Honours for artists, teachers and music champions

Royal Academy of Music Principal and *Gramophone* critic Jonathan Freeman-Attwood has been awarded a CBE in the New Year's Honours. Royal Academy Principal for 10 years, and a member of the Academy's staff for a further 20, Freeman-Attwood is also the producer of more than 250 recordings – including *Gramophone* Award-winners – and, as a trumpeter, soloist on 10 albums. Violinist Anthony Marwood's achievements were recognised with an MBE; his most recent release was of Walton's Violin Concerto – his 50th release on the Hyperion label – described by *Gramophone* in July as a 'consistently absorbing performance' from 'an enviably secure and articulate soloist'. David Temple, conductor of Crouch End Festival Chorus and Hertfordshire Chorus, also received an MBE, while impresario Lilian Hochhauser was named CBE, and Sarah Alexander, Artist Director and Chief Executive of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, was awarded an OBE.

Warner Classics celebrates the complete Claude Debussy



Arguably this year's most significant composer anniversary is the centenary of Debussy's death. We'll be exploring his music, and its impact on subsequent generations of composers and performers in our next issue. But Warner Classics has begun the year by releasing what it describes as 'the most complete collection ever made of recordings of his music.'

The 33-disc set covers all Debussy's known works, drawing on the label's catalogue – which also includes the EMI Classics archive – and featuring renowned artists including pianists Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Martha Argerich, violinists Renaud Capuçon and Yehudi Menuhin, the Quatuor Ébène, singers Roberto Alagna, Natalie Dessay and Véronique Gens, and conductors Sir Simon Rattle and François-Xavier Roth. The box even features Debussy himself performing on piano, both recordings made from piano rolls, and accompanying the Scottish soprano Mary Garden, his original *Mélisande*. Also included are transcriptions and orchestrations of Debussy's works by other composers that Debussy himself had approved, and also Debussy's own transcriptions of works by other composers. The set – which is currently available online for just under £70 – also includes six world-premiere recordings made specifically for it.

Festival roles for leading soloists



Trumpeter takes over: new job for Alison Balsom

Trumpeter Alison Balsom has been appointed Artistic Director of Cheltenham Music Festival. The acclaimed virtuoso and 2013 *Gramophone* Artist of the Year has made recordings for Warner Classics that stretch back more than a decade; they range from Bach to a recorded premiere of a concerto, *Seraph*, written for her by James MacMillan (an Editor's Choice in 2012). She is also an advocate for music in wider society, and the Festival's support of education and outreach was, Balsom says, a key factor in the post's appeal.

'I am delighted to be joining Cheltenham Music Festival, which has such a strong commitment to bringing classical music to the widest possible audience, and to supporting young talent,' she said. The Cheltenham Festival was founded in 1945, the inaugural event featuring Benjamin Britten conducting the first performance of his *Interludes* from *Peter Grimes*.

Balsom isn't the only artist to have forged links with festivals this year. The Aldeburgh Festival has announced that this year's event – which runs from June 8-24 – will feature several Artists in Residence: conductor John Wilson, flautist Claire Chase and this month's cover artist, Patricia Kopatchinskaja: the violinist will programme the final days of the festival, including an intriguing staged concert featuring video and sound design titled 'Bye Bye Beethoven', which, Aldeburgh claims, 'articulates the sense of oppression of a classical musician who in conventional programming is limited to a mostly retrospective view of musical culture.'

ONE TO WATCH

Trio Isimsiz

Trio Isimsiz come with high recommendation, having been championed by YCAT, the UK organisation which nurtures and develops emerging artists. Winning First Prize and the Audience Prize at the Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition will equally have drawn this young piano trio some attention.

The ensemble – which formed in 2009 at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where they are currently Fellows – comprises pianist Erdem Misirliglu (a Concerto Finalist in the 2008 BBC Young Musician competition), violinist Pablo Hernán Benedí (a member of the Chiaroscuro Quartet formed by Alina Ibragimova), and cellist Michael Petrov (who represented the UK in the European Concert Halls Organisation Rising Star series).



Their debut disc, recorded at Snape Maltings Concert Hall, includes Brahms's Piano Trio No 3, a work entitled *Between Tides* by Takemitsu, and Beethoven's *Ghost* Trio. Released on the Rubicon label, we'll be reviewing it next month. Isimsiz, in case you were wondering, is Turkish for 'no name' – a modest title for a group with a bright future.

GRAMOPHONE *Online*

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New Gramophone podcasts

This month, Editor Martin Cullingford catches up with two of today's most fascinating virtuosos to discuss their latest projects. Kirill Gerstein's all-Gershwin album, released by Myrios Classics, draws on his love of the composer's music and his own jazz background. Lisa Batiashvili's new disc for DG, meanwhile, pairs Prokofiev's two violin concertos. Tune in via our website, iTunes, or your podcast app of choice.



Lisa Batiashvili talks Prokofiev in our podcast

Discover Komitas

Lucine Grigoryan recently recorded an album of little-known piano music, called 'Seven Songs', by the Armenian composer Komitas for the ECM label. In Simon Broughton's exclusive feature for the *Gramophone* website, he explores the music and identifies what makes it so evocative, and speaks to Grigoryan about what Komitas's piano works mean to her as an artist and as an Armenian.

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IN THE STUDIO

Pianist **Leon McCawley** was at the Turner Sims Concert Hall in Southampton on December 22 and 23 recording an all-Schubert programme for SOMM. The disc, which includes the *Wanderer Fantasy*, D760, is due for release in October ● Japanese percussionist **Kuniko** has just completed the second and final session of her Steve Reich *Drumming* recording at Aichi Arts Center, Nagoya. It is scheduled for release on Linn Records in September ● Pianist **Bertrand Chamayou** was at the Radio France Auditorium in Paris at

the beginning of December to record Saint-Saëns's Second and Fifth Piano Concertos. He was accompanied by the Orchestre National de France under Emmanuel Krivine, and the results will be released by Erato in September ● **Beethoven's Triple Concerto** will be recorded in a live performance at La Seine Musicale on February 17, for release by Warner Classics in early 2019. The scheduled soloists are violinist Alexandra Conunova, cellist Natalie Clein and pianist David Kadouch, with accompaniment from Laurence Equilbey and her Insula Orchestra.

STUDIO FOCUS *Baiba Skride*

The Latvian violinist on recording Korngold and Bernstein for a double disc on Orfeo, due out this August

You recorded Korngold's Concerto and Bernstein's Serenade last August in Gothenburg, and will record Rózsa's Concerto in May in Tampere ...

We couldn't get the same orchestra for all three pieces, but Santtu-Matias Rouvali is conducting everything. I've recorded with him before and I know how he works so I'm not worried. He's a crazy guy! He's so fantastic, I love him. He has a great technique, and he knows which parts to fix and which to leave alone. It's rare for a young conductor to be that sensitive.

Do recordings make you nervous?

Earlier on in my career, I found it far more difficult to get into the recording mindset. Then I realised a trick – don't put the red light on! For me, that light signals danger. So I've started to enjoy recording sessions now. Plus, with Santtu, he's relaxed and doesn't obsess too much. He's also so energetic and fresh that it never gets boring.

How did the Gothenburg sessions pan out?

I know the GSO pretty well so I had huge trust in them and knew they'd be great in this repertoire. But we only had three days so it was quite tight! We started with the Korngold – compared to the Bernstein, it's for bigger forces and the orchestra were more familiar with it. We also felt that it would give



Recording sessions no longer hold any fear for Skride

us more freedom and help everyone to relax. So I met with Santtu to discuss what was important and then it was a case of jumping into the water and seeing how it went.

Were you pleased with the Korngold?

The orchestra was very responsive and it felt good. It's such a happy, romantic and emotional piece – there's no tragedy. For the player, of course, it's very complicated, which is why I practised like crazy beforehand! And for the conductor it's a nightmare – there's rubato in every single bar. You have to hope that you're both on the same page, but with Santtu I had a feeling we would be suited – and we were.

And the Bernstein?

I love the piece, but it's not often played in Europe – it's for a small orchestra and lots of

percussion so it can slip through the net. It's also challenging – the violin writing isn't very idiomatic, the intonation can be difficult, there's nowhere to breathe – and it's hard to get the overall idea of the piece because it's all chopped up into different movements.

What did the GSO make of it?

I had great players at my disposal, and I was particularly impressed by the strings in the third movement, which is very fast. The last movement is perhaps the most challenging because it has to have this Bernstein 'groove', so the players need to know it almost by heart. But we had enough time to repeat it and it was actually a lot of fun because of that jazzy vibe.

You'd worked with your sound engineer and producer, Lars Nilsson, before ...

I can trust him to choose the right takes and also, during the process itself, to hear things that on stage I can't. Musically we are always going in the same direction, which makes for a relaxed atmosphere. I've listened to his edit now and given him my comments – and then he'll come back to me with what should be the final version. I'm never 100 per cent happy of course – it's a momentary picture of those three days. But it's your work, you did it, and then you have to let it go.



Bernstein's centenary is marked by the major labels

Bernstein's living legacy, a century on

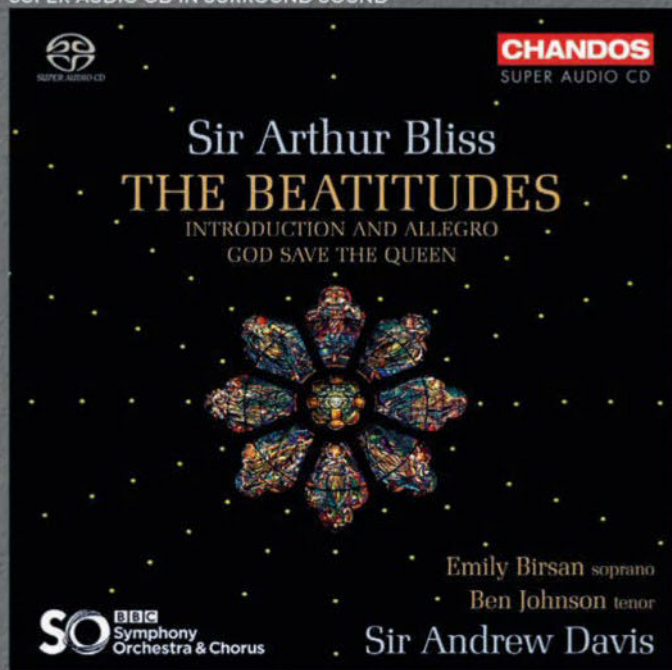
Some impressive catalogue projects are marking Bernstein's centenary. Already out is Sony's set of 100 discs, all remastered from the original tapes and beautifully presented in original jacket slip cases, of his recordings for American Columbia. DG's celebration of his complete recordings for the label will divide into Bernstein the conductor and

the composer, the former promising 121 CDs and 36 DVDs, the latter 26 CDs and three DVDs; there will also be a vinyl set of the 1970 Beethoven symphony cycle with the Vienna Philharmonic. Warner, meanwhile, is recording Bernstein's symphonies with Antonio Pappano, who, as an approachable advocate for music, follows very much in Bernstein's spirit.

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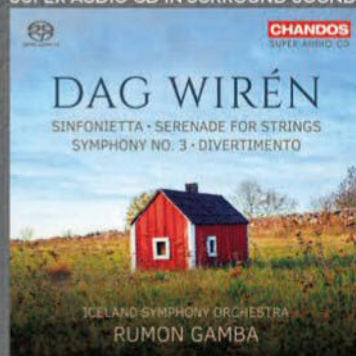
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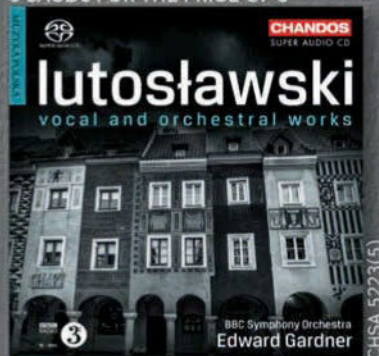
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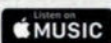
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ARTISTS & THEIR INSTRUMENTS

Alexander Melnikov on his 1875 Bösendorfer piano

“The Bösendorfer is the first historic piano I ever bought. I bought it from Edwin Beunk, a friend of mine and a very important restorer of old pianos. I was visiting him about 20 years ago, and I was in this showroom with all these incredible pianos, trying out everything, and there was the Bösendorfer which I liked very much and could afford since the restoration it needed wasn't too crazily extensive.

I've done many recordings on it - the Brahms Horn Trio, all the Brahms violin sonatas and also early Brahms piano music - so by now I really know it quite well. It's kind of historically appropriate only for Brahms, and maybe Tchaikovsky or Dvořák. It is really tricky to play. It doesn't have this double escapement which Erard invented so it has tricky *legato* control, very tricky *pianissimo* control, and if you try to play fast repeated notes it ends up in disaster more often than not. So the key to playing it is that despite the fact that it's already big and heavy you have to apply the principle of playing on a Viennese instrument, which is very different. Everything we learn in school as modern pianists - and this was quite a big shock for me - absolutely tells you how *not* to play on a Viennese piano. When you play on a Viennese piano you have to remove all your weight - if you press down on the key you kill your own sound. There is the famous painting of Brahms that exists when he is sitting



and leans back and crosses his hands on the keyboard (funnily enough when I was learning to play on the Bösendorfer, that painting was the breakthrough moment for me - I thought, wait a second, let's remove all the weight, let's just play as if you're playing an early instrument).

When I was thinking about what to record Liszt's *Réminiscences de Don Juan* on, since he gave his praise to Bösendorfer and since this early work was before Steinways, I thought, 'Why not try it on the Bösendorfer?' It might have been a crazy idea, but actually it was a success, and this music just feels right on this piano. And of course the mechanical properties of the piano are just one side of the medal, and the other side is the sound. I bought this instrument in the first place because I absolutely love the sound of it, it still has this dark, woody yet very bright Viennese impossible combination. I have the feeling that it has matured together with me and the way I play it. I think it was the correct choice, or at least it convinces me.”

Liszt's *Réminiscences de Don Juan* features on Melnikov's new disc, out on February 9

Illustrator joins up with NYO

Chris Riddell - illustrator, author and cartoonist - has been invited to work with Britain's National Youth Orchestra as Artist in Residence. The former UK Children's Laureate provided live illustrations for Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* in January, the NYO's first performance of a complete opera. You can read more about the role of classical music in his life and work in next month's My Music feature.

Decca snaps up Welsh tenor

Decca Records has signed Welsh tenor Trystan Llŷr Griffiths. Mentored by Sir Bryn Terfel, his background includes singing in the Eisteddfodau aged five, and more recently training at the Royal Academy of Music, Cardiff's Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the National Opera Studio in London. Last year he joined the International Opera Studio in Zürich. His debut album will be released this year.

Irish National Opera opens

The newly created Irish National Opera - an institution formed from the merger of Wide Open Opera and Opera Theatre Company, and backed by Ireland's Arts Council - will open its inaugural season on February 24 with Thomas Adès's *Powder Her Face*. Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* will be the next two operas to follow later in the season.

Hughes honours Handel's soprano

Soprano Ruby Hughes's next project - released in March by Chandos - will explore music written for Italian soprano Giulia Frasi, Handel's last prima donna. Arias are taken both from Handel's operas and those of his contemporaries, including some modern premieres. Hughes will discuss the album - conducted by Laurence Cummings with the OAE - with James Jolly in a forthcoming *Gramophone* podcast.

FROM WHERE I SIT

Edward Seckerson ponders the nature of comparative reviewing



Last month's focus on the Järvi conducting dynasty has prompted me to reflect on the number of times Järvi senior (father Neeme) has come out on top in my own comparative reviewing – not least on BBC Radio 3's *Record Review* where he has scooped at least as many Building a Library choices as the best of his peers. Off the top of my head his recordings of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony (still an absolute scorcher) and Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* were my top choices at the time I surveyed all the available recordings of those works. There were others.

Comparative reviewing is, of course, at the very heart of what a classical music journalist does and, as the wider catalogue of recordings and their easy accessibility has grown exponentially, so too has the value of detailed and well-reasoned advice such as one finds in the pages of this magazine. It's all so subjective, of course, but as readers and listeners alike get to know the personal tastes (and foibles) of their favourite critics they are able to process their opinions and, if you like, 'hear' those recordings before doing so through the descriptive elements of the review alone.

Long before I started writing for *Gramophone* I would weigh up the words of my favourite critics, in some cases read between them, and often plump not for the 'best all-round' recommendation of a particular work but the one I felt would excite and engage me the most. To this day I can remember thinking that I might actually get more from the Charles Munch/Boston Dvořák Eighth than the spanking new Kertész/LSO one. Initially I was swayed to the latter; eventually I would have both. Then again, how I agonised over my first *Aida* – knowing that the Gold Standard was Karajan/Decca with Tebaldi and Del Monaco but sensing that the new Solti/RCA with Leontyne Price, Vickers, and Gorr would blow my socks off. It still does.

When I could afford to add multiple versions of a piece into my vinyl collection (often through second-hand sources) there was no stopping me. Which may account for the fact that long before I started writing about music I probably had in excess of 25 versions of *The Rite of Spring* on my shelves and heaven knows how many Mahler symphonies. The point being, I suppose, that even a well-annotated musical text is open to many different interpretations wherein the subtlest shifts in emphasis, colour and atmosphere can utterly transform the outcome. That's the fun and fascination of being both music lover and collector.

Coming back to Neeme Järvi, we are not talking here of an assertively 'interventionist' conductor but rather a sage musical commentator with an innate sense of 'how the music should go'. I can only remember one glaring instance in the opening movement of Shostakovich's *Leningrad* Symphony where he wilfully ignored the composer's directive *not* to increase the tempo as the *Boléro*-like climax intensified. Composer 1: Järvi 0.

Who knows how and why the magic descends on some occasions and not on others – especially in the recording studio where the frisson of a live performance isn't an added factor. The score often won't tell you why – but you'll know it when you hear it. 6

OPUS ARTE

NEW RELEASES



THE SLEEPING BEAUTY TCHAIKOVSKY Royal Opera House

Royal Ballet Principal Marianela Nuñez delights as Princess Aurora, with Vadim Muntagirov as her Prince Florimund, in this performance of a timeless classic. This *Sleeping Beauty* captures all the magic and virtuosity that ballet has to offer.

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ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA SHAKESPEARE Royal Shakespeare Company

Following his critically acclaimed productions of *Othello* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, Iqbal Khan returns to direct Shakespeare's tragedy of love and duty, picking up the story where *Julius Caesar* ends. Antony Byrne and Josette Simon star in the title roles.

DVD | BLU-RAY



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Music and speeches from the 2014 Royal Shakespeare Company productions directed by Christopher Luscombe. Music by Nigel Hess.

CD



ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA: MUSIC & SPEECHES SHAKESPEARE Royal Shakespeare Company

Music and speeches from the 2017 Royal Shakespeare Company production directed by Iqbal Khan. Music by Laura Mvula.

CD

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The unstoppable KOPATCHINSKAJA

The fiery Moldovan violinist has unleashed the staggering force of her personality on a new disc of sonatas by Debussy, Ravel, Poulenc and Bartók, writes Andrew Mellor



This hasn't started well. The recording session I have travelled to Grenoble to witness has been postponed. Polina Leschenko, who will partner Patricia Kopatchinskaja in violin and piano works by Debussy, Ravel, Poulenc and Bartók, is not happy with the piano. The only option is to have an instrument she knows driven across the Alps from Geneva. It will be here, with a new technician, some time around 10pm.

It is now just after lunch. What could have resembled a crisis meeting backstage at Grenoble's Maison de la culture feels more like an extended herbal tea break. I walk into the green room and am introduced. 'You have the same headphones as me ... yes, Sennheiser,' Kopatchinskaja pronounces, as if meeting a potential new friend on her first day at school. After that, it is straight into the rollercoaster of poetry and analogy that colours this unmistakeable artist's everyday conversation. Invariably, she shuttles between enraptured delight discussing the music she loves, and impatient defiance, lambasting the creative stasis she sees all around her in the classical music world. In both, she has a habit of reaching for scented, folkloric metaphors.

Soon enough, logistics take over. Kopatchinskaja decides to record the unaccompanied introduction to Ravel's *Tzigane* while the piano weaves its way over the mountains from Switzerland. I drift into the control room behind Didier Martin of Alpha Classics, his daughter Bettina and the producer Peter Laenger. Kopatchinskaja takes up her position on stage and *Tzigane* is kicked into life with a dirty attacca.

Even after the seductive performance of the piece Kopatchinskaja laid down on a 2010 recording, the sensory overload that comes next takes everyone in the room by surprise. In *Tzigane*'s introductory incantation, she sounds shamanistic one moment, cartoon-like the next. There is an idea – an image – for every phrase; many are taken instantly again without so much as pause for breath; a delve deeper into each image. There is grit. There is singing and there are foot stamps ('Ha! Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock!' Kopatchinskaja proclaims at one point).

But it is too much, and she knows it. She comes backstage to listen. Then she casts the headphones aside, stands up, widens her already wide eyes, and begins one of her characteristic monologues. 'It should ... I don't know ... it should sound like a *bomb* [she makes an explosion noise], after which everything is different. Like, you go to a museum to see the Mona Lisa, but someone has stolen it. And instead, they have replaced it with something completely different.'

Back on stage, she plays for another 10 minutes. Then, she tears around the corner into the control room once more. 'That's

it! The Mona Lisa has been replaced with a picture of a small child!' On stage again, she takes it from the top. The performance is less wild, but if anything more spiritual and affecting. There is innocence now, and a degree more control even though the tempo is faster. The performance is still full of colour but now it has a consistent thread – played without interruption or repetition – and a certain guarded momentum to counter the narrative pull. *Tzigane*'s introduction, everyone agrees, is in the can.

You always remember the first time you encountered Patricia Kopatchinskaja. For me, it was at the 2012 *Gramophone* Awards, in a performance that a badly timed toilet break could have bypassed altogether but which had many in the room nearly choking on their crème brûlées. There was the wild hair, the lack of shoes and the withering look she gave the dress-coded audience offset by her trademark manic grin. But of far more importance was the noise she made, which exploded like a hand grenade, even in the dull acoustic of The Dorchester's ballroom. Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances* weren't note perfect. Instead, they were yanked out of the civilised world of the concert hall, and ignited by the raw, urgent communicative tradition from whence they came.

That is what Kopatchinskaja does – the whole package. That is why she is followed avidly by some and avoided at all costs by others; how she can win *Gramophone*'s Recording of the Year for one concerto recording in 2013, and have another pretty much trounced three years later (see Mark Pullinger on her Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, 02/16). The effect is that anyone who values revisionism and emotional authenticity awaits her next release with bated breath. Even if you're convinced you won't like it, you have to hear it. The conductor Vladimir Jurowski, she tells me, refuses to accompany her account of the Tchaikovsky Concerto despite embracing her in other repertoire. One need only think of Leonard Bernstein and Glenn Gould.

That Recording of the Year accolade was for the Moldovan violinist's recording of concertos by Ligeti, Eötvös and Bartók (No 2). She has recorded the Beethoven, Schumann, Stravinsky and Prokofiev (No 2) concertos, and concertante works by Tigran Mansurian, Giya Kancheli, Faradz Karayev, Gerd Kühr, Gerald Resch and Otto Zykan. 'My ideal was to record only music by living composers,' she says over dinner after the *Tzigane* session. 'But I then understood that the repertoire pieces were being misused for purposes that aren't musical – to show off certain traditions which have nothing to do with the works.' Hear Kopatchinskaja playing



Recording at Grenoble's Maison de la culture with pianist Polina Leschenko: despite major delays, a barefooted Patricia Kopatchinskaja seems to take it all in her stride

music by dead composers on disc now, and it will usually be on a distinctive concept album spiked with folk music, re-upholstered repertoire or personal narratives.

Not, however, in the case of what she's recording in Grenoble. 'Yes this project looks more normal,' she concedes. 'But the interpretations will be far from normal.' That I can well believe. She claims the star of the recording – and the reason for making it – is Leschenko, a reclusive pianist and favourite of Martha Argerich who has consciously withdrawn from the rat race of the music business. 'She is the most poetic, non-pianistic pianist I know,' says Kopatchinskaja. 'She is a perfume, a magician – a person who sometimes plays the piano, and when she does, the biggest diamond on our earth starts to shine.'

The repertoire is loosely united by Jelly d'Arányi, the Budapest-born grand-niece of Joseph Joachim famous for

reviving Schumann's Violin Concerto by making contact with the composer long after his death. D'Arányi inspired Ravel to write *Tzigane* after performing Bartók's Second Violin Sonata (dedicated to her, like the first), in his company. I suggest there might be a connection in the idea of grief, too: Debussy's Violin Sonata of 1917 was shaped by the losses of war while Poulenc's, which completes the programme with the Bartók, commemorated the poet Federico García Lorca. 'Well, everything can help,' comes the noncommittal response. You soon realise that Kopatchinskaja doesn't think in tangible themes.

She thinks instead in feelings and pictures – with pure instinct. 'I play a piece, and I have a scenario in my head which doesn't have to inhabit the right time or the right place,' she explains. She refers to her Tchaikovsky recording, and the Canzonetta described by Pullinger as 'far too quiet, more akin



to crooning' (yes, she saw the review). 'It's about lost love in the woods,' Kopatchinskaja says. 'I imagine the trees, and I whisper to him: where are you, my love? It's a fragile, vulnerable whisper. Guilty too.' She seems to be referring to Tchaikovsky himself: 'You know he was gay?'

'I don't play in a way that pleases people. I want people to be with me every second but I don't want them to be comfortable'

I ask if Jurowski's refusal to collaborate with her on the piece, and the criticism following the release of her recording (there were plenty of glowing reviews, too), prompted her to question her approach. 'I understand the reaction, because it was confrontational,' she says, her tone not so much conciliatory as enlivened. 'I don't play in a way that pleases people. I want people to be with me every second but I don't want them to be comfortable. This Romantic sound is just about pleasure – comfort and pleasure. People who play only Chopin, Rachmaninov and Tchaikovsky are stuck on their beautiful sofa at home. They have no antennae. People who play early music have antennae.'

At the mention of early music, we move to the issue of text in relation to interpretation – perhaps the most pertinent way in which the historically informed performance movement has coloured approaches to music outside the confines of the Baroque and Classical eras. 'I don't believe in the score, actually,' Kopatchinskaja says, but with an uncharacteristic

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With Polina Leschenko: 'When she plays the piano, the biggest diamond on earth starts to shine'

caution. 'Notes are like handcuffs. Or brain-cuffs. I actually think one should forget everything about a piece and create a new piece in the moment. But that's probably illegal.'

As it happens, Kopatchinskaja's performances rarely stray from the advice of the score, even though they frequently give the impression of doing so. Her recording of Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata with Fazıl Say is a good example; it is wild, sensual, brutish and gritty. But against the text, and when compared to interpretations from some great violinists of the Romantic school, it is notably neat and respectfully true.

We often associate those propulsive qualities with youth. In fact, it is difficult to age Kopatchinskaja even when sitting opposite her in the light of a summer evening. But I'd probably put her somewhere in the mid-to-late twenties. 'I'm now 40,' she says. 'I have a lot of grey hair. I can feel myself becoming more respectable!' You'll soon be playing like Anne-Sophie Mutter, I joke. 'I will change the world, but I will not become Anne-Sophie Mutter!' she shoots back with a laugh. For all her imaginative flights – sometimes illuminating, sometimes tenuous – she speaks with care and generally at low volumes. She has the respectfulness of a well-raised child.

'You know what's strange? What critics write about. They describe how you look, what you wear. They speak so little about the music. I want to read about the music'

But as we discuss the letter of the score and critical responses to her performances, she adopts the impatient tone that is another characteristic. 'Tempi, articulation ... are these things really interesting?' she asks, setting her cutlery down. I suggest they might be, from a critical point of view, to those who need advice on whether to buy a particular recording. 'You know what's most strange to me? What critics write about,' she says. 'They describe in so many sentences how you look, what you wear, whether you play barefoot. They speak so little about their own imagination, about the music. I want to read about the music.'

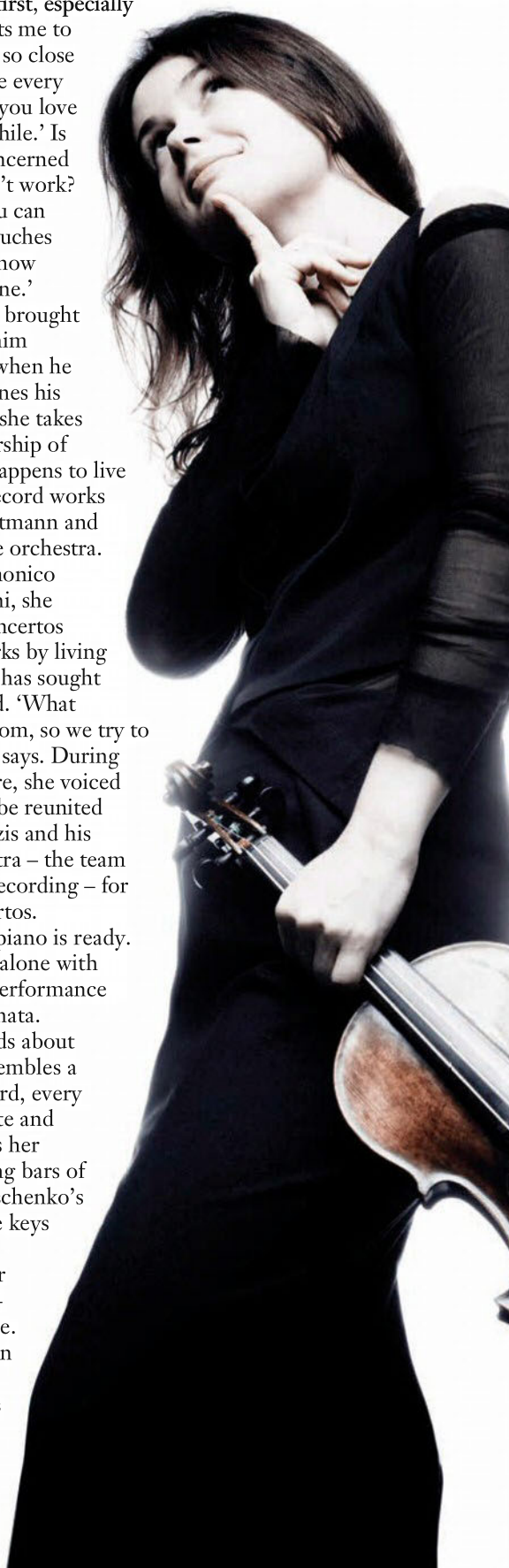
The next morning, there is more bad news. The piano arrived from Geneva, and so did the technician. But his tools were stolen from his car overnight. While Didier Martin attempts to source a new set of specialist tuning tools

from somewhere in Grenoble, the sessions are postponed once more.

In the meantime, there is little to do but wait. I join Peter Laenger, the producer, in the cold silence of the control room. 'Patricia knows what sound she wants to produce,' he says, thumbing his scores. 'She likes it to have that grit. It sounds strange at first, especially as she wants me to record her so close and include every noise. But you love it after a while.' Is he ever concerned that it won't work? 'I think you can tell. If it touches you, you know it will be fine.'

Didier Martin, who brought Kopatchinskaja with him from the Naïve label when he moved to Alpha, outlines his star's future plans. As she takes up the artistic directorship of Camerata Bern (she happens to live in the city), she will record works by Karl Amadeus Hartmann and Frank Martin with the orchestra. With Il Giardino Armonico and Giovanni Antonini, she will record Vivaldi concertos coupled with new works by living Italian composers she has sought out and commissioned. 'What Patricia needs is freedom, so we try to give it to her,' Martin says. During dinner the night before, she voiced her personal quest to be reunited with Teodor Currentzis and his musicAeterna Orchestra – the team for the Tchaikovsky recording – for Mozart's violin concertos.

Suddenly, the new piano is ready. Leschenko warms up alone with an almost-complete performance of Liszt's B minor Sonata. Kopatchinskaja's words about her ring true. She resembles a panther at the keyboard, every bit as reactive, intricate and poetically seductive as her partner. In the opening bars of Poulenc's Sonata, Leschenko's hands spring from the keys as if they are red-hot. The violinist kicks her right leg into the air – a characteristic gesture. Kopatchinskaja's violin rattles and buzzes. But as the sonata slips into lyricism, her tone is creamy and



rhapsodic too, perhaps a touch nostalgic in the Intermezzo's double-stopped lamentations.


Even in this most changeable of pieces, the two players hardly look at one other. When a passage grinds to a halt as if through mutual consent, the two skip back to the same precise point of approach without a word. I can't remember attending a recording session with such little verbal communication. The delays mean I won't get to hear her record the Debussy. Nor Bartók's Second Sonata, in which the piano and violin share no themes and appear, for the most part, locked in confrontation. But the behaviour on show offers a tantalising glimpse of its probable qualities.

Despite thriving on atmosphere – she usually creates it herself by entering a polite concert scenario and charging it with thrilling unease – Kopatchinskaja likes the process of recording. It allows her to be as spontaneous as she wishes, even to the point of derailment. Does she miss the audience? 'The audience is in my head,' she responds. What about preparation? 'You prepare technically, but you don't fix anything,' she says, 'you just start to paint your picture.' And wait for a workable interpretation to emerge? 'You just finish your picture. Nothing else.'

'Things are changing. We play for the audience in a different way. Some discover a new world. Some hate it'

What sort of picture the process delivers will be in Kopatchinskaja's hands as much as Laenger's. She will travel to Stuttgart to edit the takes at his side. But this will be no hunt for crystalline perfection. The violinist explains how she sought to 'take everything that is me – the imperfect, the rough' into her acclaimed recording of the Eötvös, Bartók and Ligeti concertos. 'Otherwise,' she says, 'it doesn't have anything to do with life.' There, in essence, is Kopatchinskaja's musical world view. 'Civilisation has killed our instincts,' she says later. 'They call them conservatoires because they make preserves,' later still. Even if the pun doesn't quite work, the sentiment is clear.

Despite her individuality, Kopatchinskaja is not alone. She has co-conspirators in Currentzis, Jurowski (sometimes), Say and others. Then there are her counterparts: a new generation of revisionist musicians, Víkingur Ólafsson, Vilde Frang and many more besides who are, for want of a better phrase, putting the ugliness and truth of real life into interpretations of concert pieces that have, they would argue, been ossified in politeness for far too long. They are willing to question interpretative norms. But even more sacrilegiously, they are willing to make mistakes in the quest for greater personal and emotional authenticity.

The question, then, is whether this is an alternative streak or an emerging orthodoxy. 'I think things are changing,' says Kopatchinskaja. 'The audience didn't know that there is another possibility and now they do. We play for them in a different way: some of them discover a new world and start to bring their friends; some of them hate it and don't come anymore. And when the audience wants a different spirit, the institutions will change.' Whether or not she is proved right, the conversation itself is bearing rich and unusual fruits that are stimulating our industry from every angle. 

► Read Gramophone's review on page 49



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Tzigane by violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, who has been playing and dancing this music since her childhood in Moldova, does not sound like *salon music*... After a much-fêted recital at Wigmore Hall in 2017, the *Financial Times* wrote: «In another life, Patricia Kopatchinskaja might have been a rock star. This is a violinist who loves taking risks...» For her third album on Alpha, Patricia Kopatchinskaja is joined by a highly talented pianist, Polina Leschenko. Together they form a partnership that breathes as one, and the joy they experience in their music-making is breathtakingly apparent.

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THANK YOU *for the music*

On the cusp of his 75th birthday, the Latvian conductor Mariss Jansons reflects on his long and distinguished career with Michael McManus but says he still has ambitions to fulfil

Lunchtime approaches on a biting cold November day in Munich. In the suffocating acoustic of the generally loathed Gasteig, Mariss Jansons and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (BRSO) have been recording 'patches' or 'pick-ups'. Earlier in the week they meticulously rehearsed Bruckner's Symphony No 8 section by section, and yesterday morning they played it from start to finish, without a break. As the only person privileged enough to be listening, I clambered silently up from the stalls to the furthest point of the hall. The musicians might as well have been a world away by the time I attained the summit. Tonight they will play the work before a packed house and, in 10 days' time, a fortunate audience will hear this superlative creative partnership play the work in the peerless Great Hall of the Musikverein in Vienna. For now, though, most thoughts are of posterity: any tiny slips from yesterday can be forgiven and forgotten, because a full, immaculate performance is now 'in the can'.

The much-loved producer Wilhelm Meister is making his last recording, and the musicians have serenaded him and presented him with a retirement gift. Now he asks whether there is anything else Jansons wants to do before the players depart. Yes, replies the maestro, who then thanks his 'dear colleagues', profusely, sincerely and touchingly, for giving him the opportunity to work with such talented musicians at this level of creative endeavour. The mutual respect and affection are palpable and one cannot but reflect upon the role Jansons has played in ushering out the demagogues and taskmasters of yore, replacing them with a democratic, even republican, spirit on the podium. His arrival in London a week later is preceded by publication of an interview in which he says women on the podium are not his 'cup of tea'. For all his sophistication as a musician, there is a certain, old-world naivety about Jansons in the modern world of PR, instant offence and social media. His team from Munich close ranks fiercely: if they are annoyed, they are annoyed *for* him and not *at* him. A statement is issued and,



in a carefully calibrated, humble and gracious acceptance speech for the Royal Philharmonic Society's Gold Medal, Jansons makes a point of expressing his hope that future generations of aspirant conductors might enjoy good fortune comparable to his: both boys *and* girls.

Talking to Jansons as he contemplates his imminent 75th birthday, I am struck once again, as I so often am, by his boundless energy, positivity and essential good nature. We have spoken numerous times before, but on this occasion I had sent through some lines of questioning in advance to help him focus. He picks up immediately on the first of them. I have often read about how difficult his earliest years were, with he and his family enduring the brutal German occupation of Latvia, and I had planned to ask how much effect that experience had on his development. He immediately puts

'I went with my parents to the opera house from the age of three. Soon I knew all the ballets from memory, and some operas too'

any early travails into perspective: 'I can't say my life was very difficult – everything is relative. My parents were wonderful and gave me so much affection.' Despite the undoubted challenges of the time, during which the small Baltic state

was reannexed by the Soviet Union, becoming a musician was an ineluctable calling.

'I grew up in a musical atmosphere and there was no babysitter,' he explains. 'So I went with my parents to the

opera house from the age of three and listened to rehearsals and performances. Soon I knew all the ballets from memory and some operas too. Then my father bought a violin and started to teach me.'

A greater challenge came after the family moved to Leningrad (St Petersburg) in 1956 and Jansons was enrolled at the music academy there. 'It's difficult to leave your native



A relaxed Mariss Jansons is in typically high spirits backstage in São Paolo in 2000



Karajan Prize, 1971: Jansons (second from right) is honoured by the man himself (left)

country when you're 13 years old. I knew very little Russian and many things I didn't understand, purely because of the language. I felt uncomfortable. Also, it was not so easy to be the son of a famous conductor [Arvīds, 1914-84]. People had the perception he would just support me, regardless, so it became a question of what Mariss could do for himself and I became very serious and studied very intensely. I had a house teacher who taught me Russian and helped with translations of my work. Within half a year I was becoming fluent, and also successful in my studies.' This is characteristically modest: at 28, Jansons won the Karajan Prize in Berlin. 'Then, of course, I felt sure that I could be completely my own person. It gave me the strength and courage to feel: 'I am Mariss Jansons'. It was then that my career started.'

In the late 1980s he emerged, as if from nowhere, as the coming man of a new generation, and it was his recordings that helped to make his name. By the time that Glasnost began to open up the Soviet Bloc, Jansons – then a mature artist in his mid-40s – was already working frequently in the West, principally with the Oslo Philharmonic and the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra. His superlative recorded cycle of the

Tchaikovsky symphonies was produced in Oslo between January 1984 and December 1986 by Chandos. This not only refreshed jaded ears in the familiar triptych of late symphonies; it also demanded that we should reassess the lesser works of that canon (*Manfred* and Nos 1-3), the Oslo Philharmonic itself and also the conductor responsible for this orchestral alchemy. In November 1986, Jansons made his only studio recording with the BBC Welsh – a rather underfilled but first-rate CD of works by Shostakovich on the shortlived BBC Enterprises label – and also recorded the complete version of Rachmaninov's Second Symphony with the Philharmonia, again for Chandos.

'After my heart attack, I was very careful because I was afraid. Then I said, "Either I'm conducting 100 per cent or not at all"'

In autumn 1987, it was Jansons who led the legendary Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra on its first foray to the West in almost a decade. Following in the footsteps of his father, who had died three years earlier, Jansons was assistant to the feted (but now ailing) Evgeny Mravinsky. Chandos took its A-team to Dublin to set down Prokofiev's Symphony No 5 on that tour, a recording that more than holds its own today and one of the last to capture that orchestra while it still sounded truly distinctive.

In 1992 the London Philharmonic appointed Jansons as Principal Guest Conductor for five exciting years. The end of that partnership coincided with the start of his tenure in Pittsburgh, leading an orchestra with a proud history but with a home city in seemingly terminal decline. This partnership nearly didn't happen at all. Just as Jansons was reaching an early zenith, he suffered a heart attack while conducting *Bohème* in Oslo. Although his father had died after a similar incident in Manchester, this came as a 'great shock' – would he ever be able to pick up the pieces? 'I was afraid at first,' he says. 'How was I going to manage?' For his comeback concert he chose not Berlin, Vienna or even Oslo, but Wales – the BBC Welsh, simply because 'I liked them very much'. The experience was revelatory. 'At the beginning of the rehearsal I was very careful because I was afraid. Then, in the break, I said to my wife, "You know, I can't do it like this. Either I'm conducting 100 per cent or I'm not conducting at all." So, after the interval, I was back to normal, to full strength. Gradually I started again to work too hard, too much – and my life started again.'

I well recall being amazed – and not a little alarmed – the first time I saw Jansons conduct after this life-changing event.



Happy Birthday Maestro!

Listen to Mariss Jansons'
extraordinary legacy:
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With a live recording, 'the dangerous parts are already in the can': rehearsing and performing Bruckner's Eighth in Munich with the BRSO (below right and above)

If anything, he was more energetic than I had remembered, ending the concert doused in perspiration.

Jansons's unhappy propensity for jet lag eventually defeated him in Pittsburgh and, in 2002, he announced he would step down in 2004. He did make a handful of impressive recordings there, however, and the CD of Shostakovich's Symphony No 8 includes a priceless excerpt from a rehearsal, which reveals the man even more than the music itself does: we hear Jansons speak with authority (yet humility), illuminating musical insight and unerring historical authenticity. In 2003, he became Chief Conductor of the BRSO and, a year later, the sixth ever Chief Conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra.

When leading two major orchestras became too much for him, Jansons surprised many people – but not those who knew him well – by forsaking Amsterdam and extending his tenure in Munich. Nowadays Jansons can conduct wherever, whomever and whenever he likes, but he has chosen to focus his energies principally upon one orchestra. 'I always held a position with two orchestras,' he says, 'but now it's only one ... it is difficult to be Chief Conductor of two such great orchestras. When you're young it's OK, but in later years you must think more about your health. It was very difficult to leave the Concertgebouw. I liked them and they liked me.'

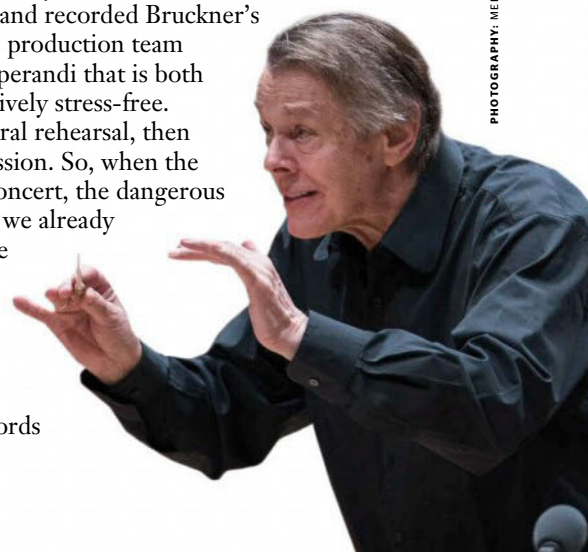
It seems like the merest blink of an eye since I was with him and the BRSO in Tokyo, just a month before Jansons turned 70, as he and his colleagues performed (and also recorded) a full cycle of the Beethoven symphonies in Suntory Hall. Five years on, this most genial of maestros seems as energetic as ever, devoted not only to maintaining and indeed raising musical standards of the BRSO, but also playing a dogged role in ensuring that, after years of squatting in the Herkulessaal (too small) and the Gasteig (wrong in almost every way), this outstanding ensemble will at long last have a home to call its own. It was precisely that struggle against the odds – against bureaucracy and against all kinds of obtuse political logjams, which seemed for so long to be in vain – which inspired Jansons to favour Munich ahead of Amsterdam. He sees parallels with Simon Rattle's stop-start campaign for a new, purpose-built concert hall in London and believes that Rattle, too, will ultimately win through.

When we speak, architects and acousticians are on the cusp of being appointed to the Munich project. 'I am 100 per cent dedicated to Munich. We have struggled for 10 years to have a hall of our own. We have a great victory, but it took a lot of energy. Now the politicians are less involved and the professionals take over. We should start to build this year, but it will take five years to complete. The new house must be

comfortable, but it must also be such that the acousticians can make a really good acoustic.' Jansons cares not only about the spiritual aspects of great music: he wants people to hear every note, every instrument, in perfect balance; he is passionate about classical music reaching out to new, young audiences; and he continues to explore new work as well as shining his distinctively inspiring, exploratory light upon familiar repertoire. 'It is terrible that culture is not supported enough anywhere, but nobody can live without culture or without art. This is impossible. It will live forever.'

Jansons and his players have adapted readily to the new contours of the market for recorded music. When this magazine gamely listed the world's top orchestras in 2008, the Concertgebouw came top and the BRSO sixth, way ahead of any other radio orchestra. Jansons sees the fact that the BRSO is a radio orchestra as a major advantage. 'They are completely comfortable that everything they do is recorded. That is what they are used to – it does not add any pressure whatsoever.' The Bavarian Radio has always recorded every concert anyway, which gives the players a considerable advantage in today's climate. 'In live performances, of course, there can always be mistakes – we are human beings, not machines,' he concedes, but 'live recording has a special atmosphere ... It's very specific. When I did make studio recordings, I would always endeavour to generate a concert atmosphere – a spirit – and to influence the players to play as though the public were there.' Microphones, then, hold no terror for members of a radio orchestra: 'When musicians see a microphone, they are mobilised more – but if they play very rarely with microphones, then they get nervous. For these BRSO players, it is just normal.'

Even so, as I saw for myself last November when Jansons and the orchestra played and recorded Bruckner's Symphony No 8, the production team has found a *modus operandi* that is both economical and relatively stress-free. 'We record our general rehearsal, then we have a "patch" session. So, when the public come to the concert, the dangerous parts, the risky ones, we already have in the can. If the concert is better, then, of course, we choose the concert.' Jansons has always had half an eye on posterity, and he records



PHOTOGRAPHY: MEISEL/BRSO


for those years yet to come, not for the here and now. 'We can listen to Mengelberg, Carlos Kleiber – and future generations will be able to listen to us, to our documents for the future. Perhaps they will like what they hear, perhaps not, but they will know how we did things, how we sounded.' It's certainly not a question of money, he insists. 'It's about satisfaction, it's not a commercial thing. Before, it meant money for the orchestra, but now it's almost impossible to earn royalties.'

Jansons continues to explore new and unexpected repertoire. He recently premiered a substantial choral piece by Wolfgang Rihm and, in this year of Leonard Bernstein's centenary, he will take his *Divertimento* and the *Candide* Overture to Lucerne. 'I like Bernstein as a composer, enormously as a conductor, but, above all, as a human being. I knew him and he was a fantastic man, a fantastic human being.' He is also considering conducting – and recording – the *Chichester Psalms*. I really, really hope that happens. So what else might the future hold? 'I want to do opera – that has always been my dream – but I never had the time to devote myself 100 per cent to it. Opera takes so much time. I hope my future work with the Concertgebouw will focus on opera. In 2017 I did *Lady Macbeth* by Shostakovich and this year it will be *The Queen of Spades*.' In recent years, Jansons has confined his guest-conducting to one programme per year with each of the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras. Consequently, barring the occasional Prom concert or appearance with 'his' orchestras at the Barbican Hall, he has become a relative stranger to London, where he was once a major presence. 'Of course I would like to come back to the London Philharmonic or the London Symphony,' he says. 'I don't know how they are now, but I'm sure they are on a high level – they were always very quick – and it's a fantastic thing that Simon [Rattle] is now in London. If they invite me, I will try to come.'

We close with my asking about any remaining ambitions. He laughs, then turns serious. 'To live and work at a high quality – not going down. I would like to remain, for as long as possible, a good conductor. And, if I feel I can't be on a good level anymore, then I must have the strength to make an immediate decision for myself: "That is enough!" It's a difficult moment. Who else will tell you? My wife, or a very, very close friend? I'm not sure. I think this is a task you must reserve for yourself.' **G** *Jansons's Bruckner Eighth recording is released in the late summer by BR-Klassik; 'Mariss Jansons: Portrait', a five-CD selection of new and already-released recordings (also on BR-Klassik), is out now*




A beaming Jansons exits the stage in Augsburg in 2017 after a concert with the BRSO


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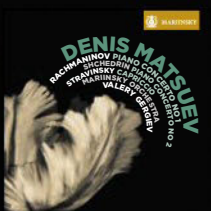
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GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

David Fanning doffs his cap to a stunning Stravinsky album from Marc-André Hamelin and Leif Ove Andsnes, including a thrilling account of *The Rite of Spring*



Stravinsky

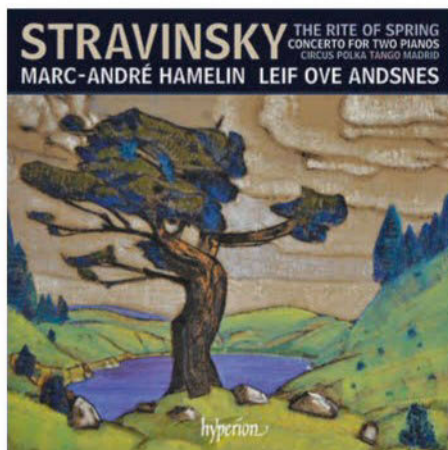
'Music for Two Pianos'

The Rite of Spring. Concerto for Two Solo Pianos.
Circus Polka (arr Victor Babin). Madrid (arr Soulima Stravinsky). Tango (arr Babin)

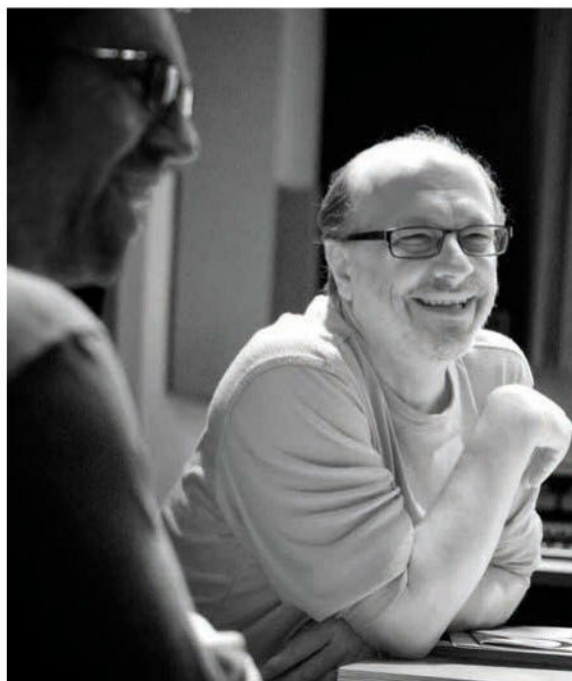
Marc-André Hamelin, Leif Ove Andsnes *pfs*
Hyperion © CDA68189 (65' • DDD)

In August 2015 I assessed a clutch of new recordings of the four-hands version of *The Rite of Spring* and noted that Guy and Bavouzet were far superior to all their rivals, not least – but also not only – because they were performing their own arrangement on two pianos rather than Stravinsky's for a single instrument. That choice frees the pianists to reincorporate some of the orchestral detail that inevitably had to go when Stravinsky made his original duet version as a purely practical way of introducing the complex and unfamiliar idiom to his Ballets Russes colleagues. It also means that a wider range of colour can be accessed, simply because the players no longer have to jostle each other for – quite literally – elbow-room.

That this superiority is not an automatic thing in actual performance is shown by Barenboim and Argerich, who, despite using two instruments, are neither as idiomatic nor as polished as their finest single-piano counterparts. But now comes a version that flies as high as the two Frenchmen, and in some respects arguably even higher. The differences in approach are very soon apparent. The Introduction to Part 1 shows that Hamelin and Andsnes are a degree more vividly recorded and that their instruments – perhaps also their touch – are more brightly coloured.



'For sheer articulacy, synchronised gymnastics, flawless balance, range of colour and flinty attack, this is breathtaking pianism'



Clear and energetic: Andsnes and Hamelin

After this brighter stage-lighting Guy and Bavouzet sound unduly muted. On the other hand the French pair contrive to work in more of the 'missing' orchestral texture, be it from the alternatives noted in the published duet score or details gleaned from the orchestral score itself (in which respect Barenboim and Argerich scarcely bothered at all). So pretty soon there are swirls of figuration from the Frenchmen, suggesting, perhaps, the mists of time as Stravinsky transports us to his mythical pre-historic arena.

One way to sum up the difference is that Guy and Bavouzet are generally more impressionistic (remember that Stravinsky and Debussy actually played the duet version together), Hamelin and Andsnes more modernistic (*The Rite* is, after all, the godfather of so much musical innovation in the past 100 years). Time and again Guy and Bavouzet score highly in terms of how much orchestral detail they are able to recover. And yet Hamelin and Andsnes are irresistibly clear and energetic, so that the sheer physical excitement is on an altogether higher level. Hear their accumulation through the 'Danse de la terre' at the end of Part 1, where the Frenchmen leave the crescendo so late that it almost doesn't happen at all. And thrill to the impact of the 'Danse sacrée', where Guy and Bavouzet have already let the preceding 'Action rituelle des ancêtres' go slightly off the boil and never fully recover momentum afterwards. Still, if I had been at the sessions I think I might have asked some annoying questions: why not restore the two quavers missing in the bar before fig 44 of the 'Jeu du



High-definition reality: Leif Ove Andsnes and Marc-André Hamelin recording in the Teldex Studio in Berlin

rapt' (surely a simple transcribing error on Stravinsky's part); why blast out the low octaves in the 'Glorification de l'élue' precisely at the point where the original scoring is comparatively light; why not let us hear at least some of the notated optional counterpoints in the central section of the 'Danse sacrée'? Admittedly such moments would probably only bother a listener who knows the scores rather well. In the final analysis both recordings are outstanding and leave all others trailing, and I wouldn't put money on their being matched any time soon. The Hyperion recording places the pianos left and right, where Chandos has them side by side. But I cannot say this would affect my choice.

For couplings, Guy and Bavouzet offered transcriptions of Debussy's *Jeux* and Bartók's *Two Pictures*, superbly played but not made by their respective composers and not wholly convincing. Hamelin and Andsnes have the Concerto for two pianos, which is Stravinskian

neoclassicism at its highest metabolic rate of musical inventiveness: by turns gleefully sardonic and inscrutable, and horribly difficult to bring off. Here my critical pen rests and I reach for my hat. For sheer articulation, synchronised gymnastics, flawless balance, range of colour and flinty attack, or any other criterion you care to reach for, this is breathtaking pianism. Stravinsky composed the piece for himself and his son, Soulima, to play, and their 1935 recording shows they could more than meet its technical demands; but their historic sound quality inevitably suggests a fuzzy black-and-white photograph by comparison with Hyperion's high-definition reality.

Throw in three miniatures – *Madrid* in Soulima's own transcription, the *Tango* and *Circus Polka* in versions by Victor Babin – plus an authoritative programme note by Stephen Walsh and you have an immensely collectable album: a strong candidate for Disc of the Year, never mind of the Month. **G**

The Rite of Spring – selected comparisons:

Barenboim, Argerich (10/14) (DG) 479 3922GH;
(EURO) **DVD** 205 9998; **CD** 205 9994

Guy, Bavouzet (8/15) (CHAN) CHAN10863

Concerto for Two Pianos – selected comparison:

I & S Stravinsky (SONY) 88897 10311-2

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



David Gutman finds much to admire in Jurowski's Prokofiev:

'The Third Symphony is an operatic spin-off full of great material however randomly stitched together' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 34**

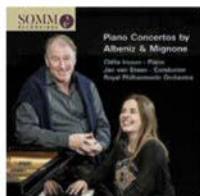


Mark Pullinger enjoys Nemanja Radulović's Tchaikovsky:

'Magic is there from Radulović's first phrase, floating on wings of fantasy after the orchestral introduction' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**

Albéniz • Mignone

Albéniz Piano Concerto No 1, 'Concierto fantástico', Op 78^a. Suite espagnole - No 1, Granada; No 5, Sevilla **Mignone** Piano Concerto^a. Valses de Esquina - No 1; No 5
Clélia Iruzun *pf*
^aRoyal Philharmonic Orchestra / Jac van Steen
Somm © SOMMCD265 (68' • ADD)



Don't let the strange cover photo put you off (conductor looking into camera, soloist

looking in a completely different direction). This is a valuable release and very well recorded (Ben Connellan in the Blackheath Concert Halls).

The Concerto by Francisco Mignone (1897-1986) – composed in 1958, though you'd never guess from its lyrical, tonal language – is given an authentic reading by Clélia Iruzun, a friend of the composer since childhood. Her booklet note tells us his widow, Maria Josephina, learnt the work with him and that 'during our recent meetings I played it for her and she gave me valuable advice'. This seems to be the only available recording of the piece, something I find rather surprising, for it might well be, as Iruzun avers, 'the best piano concerto written by a Brazilian composer'. It is certainly more enjoyable than any of those by Mignone's more famous compatriot Villa-Lobos. You can hear in the course of its three movements echoes of Prokofiev, Rachmaninov and Ravel but also the playful exuberance and rhythmic vitality of South America. My guess is that this cracking performance will tempt many others to take it up.

Iruzun pairs it with Albéniz's Piano Concerto, written quite early in his career (1887) and still relatively unknown. The composer of *Iberia* has yet to emerge with his unique voice but that does not mean the work is unattractive or poorly crafted. In fact, the reverse is true (you would, for instance, be hard of heart not to respond to the first movement's second subject),

and van Steen and Iruzun combine to give it its finest outing on disc since Felicia Blumental in the 1970s (both far preferable to the lacklustre Melani Mestre on Hyperion), though I am unsure why Somm lists the second movement simply as *Andante* when in the score it is clearly headed *Reverie et Scherzo*.

Iruzun ends the disc with two solo works apiece from each composer, well played but very much space fillers. I should have preferred another piano/orchestra work: there was room for Tavares's riotous *Concerto in Brazilian Forms*. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Albéniz Concerto – selected comparisons:
Blumental, Turin Orch, Zedda (11/71⁸) (BRAN) BR0002
Mestre, BBC Scottish SO, Brabbins
(6/15) (HYPE) CDA67918

JS Bach

Brandenburg Concertos, BWV1046-1051.
Cantatas: No 42 – Sinfonia; No 174 – Sinfonia
Berlin Baroque Soloists / Reinhard Goebel
Sony Classical ® ② 88985 36111-2 (95' • DDD)



A new set of the *Brandenburgs* from Reinhard Goebel?

One's mind immediately goes back to the 1980s, when his first, typically provocative recording with Musica Antiqua Köln (Archiv, 3/88) dropped its little bomb of shock and awe, not least with a 90-mile-an-hour first movement of No 6 and dizzying finale of No 3 that have acquired near legendary status. Even now, play them to someone who hasn't heard them before and you can be sure of an amazed response.

Has he mellowed for this new recording with the modern instruments of the Berliner Barock Solisten? Well, yes, that No 3 finale has slackened ever so slightly, as to a more serious degree has No 6. But if you imagined that was just the natural way of things as an artist gets older, prepare to discover that many of the other movements are even quicker than they were with MAK. Already in the first

of No 1 we are in unnerving territory but it is in the slow movements of Nos 1, 2 and 4, some of which are almost a minute faster than before, that we can see that Goebel is still an iconoclast who never sleeps. He doesn't explain his reasons for such pressing tempos; but while I fear some listeners may never get over them, a simple reset of the ears is all that is needed to hear Goebel's new one-in-a-bar manner as surprisingly gentle and restful. So there is method in his madness.

The sound of it is different from the earlier recording, of course, even though perhaps only the oboes are easily recognisable as modern rather than period, while the effortless ease of Reinhold Friedrich's high trumpet-playing in No 2 is a different sort of giveaway. In ensemble the group makes a splendid sound (huge in No 6!), though the acoustic of the Jesus-Christus-Kirche robs the texture of the analytical clarity offered by MAK's typically 1980s studio balance. Otherwise, Goebel's approach has the familiar hallmarks: chiselled phrasing, sudden endings, lunging slurred notes here and there, and driving rhythms where you would least expect them (for instance, the Menuetto of No 1). One thing is for certain: his interpretational thinking hasn't got any lazier for the passing of 30 years.

The standard of playing of the Berliners, built largely of musicians from the Berlin Philharmonic and the Akademie für Alte Musik, is excellent. Maybe with its oddities this is not a *Brandenburg* recording to favour over all others, but then such a thing probably doesn't exist. **Lindsay Kemp**

Berio • Maderna

'Now, and Then'

Berio Chemins V^a. Transcriptions by **Maderna**
of **Frescobaldi** Tre Pezzi **G Gabrieli** Canzone a tre cori **Legrenzi** La Bassadonna **Viadana** Le Sinfonie – La Mantovana. La Romana. La Napolitana. La Venexiana. La Veronese
Wassenaer Palestrina-Konzert

^aPablo Márquez *gtr*

Svizzera Italiana Orchestra/ Dennis Russell Davies
ECM New Series © 481 5034 (63' • DDD)



Impish virtuosity: Joseph Moog is joined by the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie in Brahms's Second Piano Concerto and Strauss's Burleske



Its title may evoke that of an album by The Carpenters in their heyday but this

disc offers a welcome sidelight on musical polymath Bruno Maderna (1920–73).

A conductor of the front rank, his commitment to Italian music of the Renaissance and Baroque was unstinting. Most of these arrangements date from the early 1950s, opening with the *Tre Pezzi* as derived from keyboard pieces by Frescobaldi and in which Maderna's objective interventionism is evident in the Webern-like clarity of its interplay between highly differentiated instrumental groups.

Such textural stratification is pursued even more intently in *La Bassadonna*, where Legrenzi's graceful original gets a vibrant makeover with wind and strings combining only in the final section. *Galant* and animated, those regional dance traits which inform Viadana's pieces are accentuated in *La Sinfonie* into vivid yet affectionate character studies, while the *Palestrina-Konzert* (though drawing on Byrd) which the diplomat and sometime composer Wassenauer published as by

Ricciotti, and which was long attributed to Pergolesi, is revealed as a robust and inventive concerto grosso whose part-writing subtly highlights the concertino elements. Maderna's last arrangement was of a Canzone by Giovanni Gabrieli, its antiphonal 'choirs' taken by woodwind, brass and strings with an expressive astringency redolent of Stravinsky.

Hardly less industrious as arranger, Luciano Berio (1925–2003) is represented by *Chemins V* (1992). As before, he transforms one of his *Sequenzas* (the 11th, for guitar) by integrating it into a chamber orchestra whose expressive restraint and fleeting prominence given to other instruments make the soloist a reticent master of ceremonies. A role Pablo Márquez takes on perceptively in this first recording – abetted by Dennis Russell Davies with his Swiss-Italian players whose playing, here as elsewhere, adds much to the attraction of this pleasurable disc.

Richard Whitehouse

Brahms • R Strauss

Brahms Piano Concerto No 2, Op 83

R Strauss Burleske

Joseph Moog *pf*

Deutsche Radio Philharmonie / Nicholas Milton
Onyx © ONYX4169 (67' • DDD)



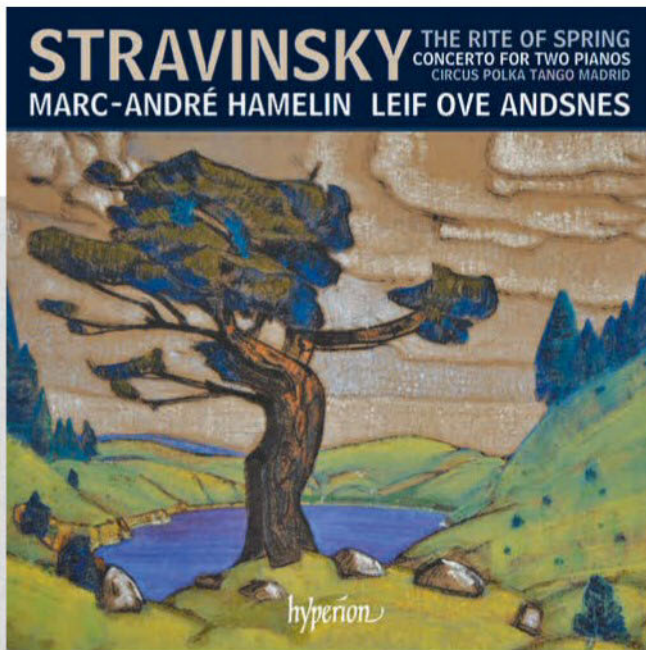
Here's the latest addition in Joseph Moog's fast-growing discography, recorded

in 2016 when he was 28. He has already impressed many – receiving *Gramophone's* own Young Artist of the Year three years ago – and with such a formidable technique he can make light of the most demanding of scores. The coupling of Brahms and Strauss is an intelligent if unusual one, with the *Burleske* paying tongue-in-cheek homage to the second movement of Brahms's Second Piano Concerto.

This is Moog's third recording with Nicholas Milton and it's clearly a partnership that works well. Milton paces the mighty exposition of Brahms's first movement with purpose and a fine sense of control and Moog's technical aplomb is abundantly apparent. Occasionally he is perhaps a little over-eager with the accentuation (sample track 1, from 7'14") but he's effective when duetting with solo orchestral instruments in the more intimate writing.

The Scherzo sounds almost inhumanly easy here: Hough in his recent recording

hyperion



The Rite of Spring as you may never have heard it: Leif Ove Andsnes and Marc-André Hamelin give the definitive performance of the composer's own rendering for two pianos. Coupled with Stravinsky's other music written or arranged for the same combination, this is an exceptional release.

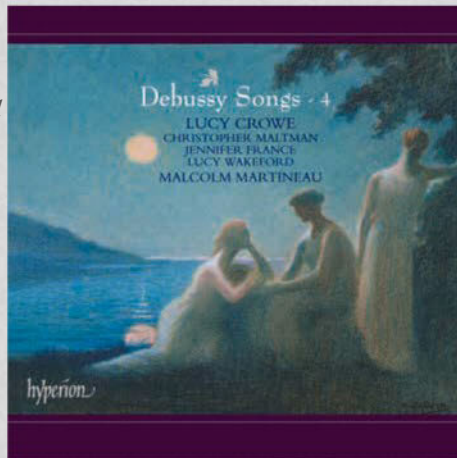
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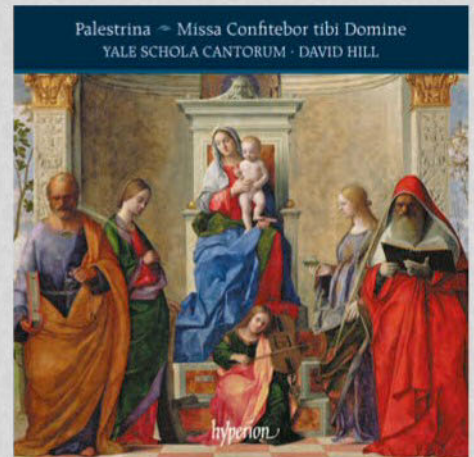
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DAVID HILL conductor



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finds a greater depth to the music and always shapes it beautifully. Beautiful shaping is of course essential in the slow movement and, while Moog's is well done, it doesn't compare to the subtle majesty with which Freire and Chailly imbue Brahms's long phrases. But Moog's finale is impressively light, conveying a vital sense of playfulness.

If the Brahms isn't quite yet his piece (I would have loved to have heard him in the First Concerto), the Strauss certainly is. In terms of impish virtuosity Moog gives even the mighty Hamelin a run for his money, cherishing not only the jaw-dropping theatrics but also the ineffably lovely melodies that break in, while the allusion in the cadenza to Wagner's *Tristan* chord is made clear without being over-egged.

In both pieces, Moog is forwardly placed within the recording, so you won't miss a note. **Harriet Smith**

Brahms – selected comparisons:

Freire, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch, Chailly
(9/06) (DECC) 475 7637DX2

Hough, Salzburg Mozarteum Orch, Wigglesworth
(1/14) (HYPE) CDA67961

Strauss – selected comparisons:

Hamelin, Berlin RSO, Volkov (5/11) (HYPE) CDA67635

Brahms

Symphony No 2, Op 73. Academic Festival Overture, Op 80. Three Hungarian Dances (orch Dausgaard). Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn, Op 56a

Swedish Chamber Orchestra / Thomas Dausgaard
BIS (P) BIS2253 (76' • DDD/DSD)



Once again, we face the familiar conundrum: a work that has overcome

'pathos and Faustian conflicts' and 'extends its warm sunshine to connoisseurs and laymen alike' (Eduard Hanslick). Writing of his Second Symphony Brahms thought, on the one hand, in terms of sweetness and merriment, while on the other he considered the score so bothered by sadness and melancholy that it should be published with a black border. The history of classical recording has its fair share of sunny and sad Seconds, with this lean, transparently voiced new version sitting confidently in the first camp. Thomas Dausgaard's orchestral layout subscribes to the good, old-fashioned method of spatially dividing first and second violin desks while his ear locates salient inner details – especially among violas (crucially) and woodwinds – so that no musical stone

remains unturned. The long first-movement repeat drifts in on the tail of a beautiful transitional passage that is otherwise lost.

Pacey, muscular, thoughtfully expressed and always mindful of where the musical arguments are heading, Dausgaard's Brahms Second is a refresher course for those who think they know the work better than they actually do. The Symphony's very opening might seem a tad ordinary until at 1'00" or so a prominent portamento on the cellos leads to a flowing, or should I say flowering, statement of the initial climax, followed by pointed woodwinds and a chamber-like statement of the 'lullaby' second subject proper. The development section (starting around 9'11") is taut, emphatic and propulsive. The 'black bordered' *Adagio non troppo* sighs wistfully and Dausgaard is careful to focus the horns when the violins enter with their statement of the opening melody. The third movement has the appropriate feel of an intermezzo about it, the mood sylph-like yet keenly energised, while the finale, once flying at full *forte*, keeps up the momentum.

The makeweights are interesting, the Variations at their best where the music is breezy and swift (again transparency is a prominent virtue), the *Academic Festival Overture* stylish and happily extrovert, though the closing 'Gaudeamus igitur' might have suggested a greater sense of ceremony. Then there are Dausgaard's own orchestrations of the *Hungarian Dances* Nos 5, 6 and 7, rather like Berio visitations, very individual in tone and texture and, like the symphony, refreshingly different from even the most recent rivals. The SACD sound is superb and the excellent booklet notes are by Horst A Scholz. **Rob Cowan**

Bruckner

Symphony No 6
Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra / Bernard Haitink

BR-Klassik (P) 900147 (55' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie im Gasteig, Munich, May 4-5, 2017



It's pleasing to see Haitink still including Bruckner's Sixth Symphony in his concert programmes, even if it doesn't feature as frequently as the last three symphonies. This recording of the Sixth is his third on a mainstream label, and arguably the most successful. His 1970 studio recording for Philips was judged

by Deryck Cooke in these pages (11/71) as being too fast, and while Haitink's tempo choices don't trouble me especially, it's not an interpretation that digs particularly deep. His live 2003 recording on Profil, made during his short tenure as principal conductor of the Staatskapelle Dresden, does not offer a significant advance over the earlier version, undermined in particular from a sub-par opening movement and a slightly dry sound.

Haitink's interpretation of the first movement in this new recording also leans towards the doctrinaire, notably in the radiant second subject group, but the recording is more sympathetic than in Dresden and the orchestral response notably more refined. Dynamic markings are meticulously observed throughout, and the solo contributions are excellent. The playing of the solo horn in bars 75-76 of the *Adagio* (6'14") is especially memorable, bringing a Mahlerian feel to this particular passage, and the Trio of the Scherzo is richly atmospheric. The performance of the finale is also spirited and persuasive, although there's a puzzling falling off of energy at the very close. On balance, this is the recording to choose for anyone wanting to hear Haitink in this symphony. Given the choice of any recording, however, I'd plump for Sawallisch on Orfeo or the 1995 Wand performance on Profil, both of which come closer to communicating the essence this wonderful symphony.

Christian Hoskins

Selected comparisons:

Bavarian St Orch, Sawallisch (6/84) (ORFE) C024 821A

NDR SO, Wand (10/96) (RCA) 09026 68452-2

Staatskapelle Dresden, Haitink (5/07) (PROF) PH07011

Castelnuovo-Tedesco • Gál

Castelnuovo-Tedesco Cello Concerto
Gál Cello Concerto, Op 67

Raphael Wallfisch VC

Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra / Nicholas Milton
CPO (P) CPO555 074-2 (66' • DDD)



Both these composers were forced from their homelands by Nazism, a big enough upheaval

for anyone to come to terms with (or not). But Michael Haas, doyen of music forbidden by the Third Reich, also writes in the detailed booklet that both 'relied on their strong musical personalities to see them safely across the turbulence of inter-war atonal experimentation'.

Haas is careful with his comparisons; we're dealing with composers whose paths didn't cross but who did work to

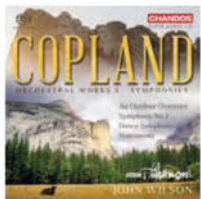
'organically classical' (rather than neoclassical) templates. Gál, of course, suckled on Brahms while Castelnuovo-Tedesco was closer to his country's avant garde. You can hear as much in the two scores but strength of musical personality is another question.

Both concertos are fascinating to encounter but Gál's is less demonstrative and more moving. His was no comfortable exile and the tragedy that coloured it is a direct context for the concerto of 1944. Perhaps the most overt pain is heard in the flute of the second movement, which tries in vain to flutter free. The cello sings more of longing and hope, which prepares the work's heartening ending: whimsical then suddenly, forcefully optimistic.

Gál's cello also intertwines with an oboe to beautiful effect but Castelnuovo-Tedesco's orchestration is more glitzy, a sonic Hollywood to Gál's Edinburgh. The language is bolder too but the 1935 score doesn't feel as tight and can seem stylistically displaced, from the Kurt Weill-like song of its slow movement on the double-stopped cello to the swashbuckling spirit of the finale (which prompts a comparison with Korngold's shorter but more imposing concerto). The piece was written for Piatigorsky, Raphael Wallfisch's teacher. Despite the link, and the extent to which Wallfisch inhabits it, I wouldn't mind betting that Gál's work moved him more too. **Andrew Mellor**

Copland

'Orchestral Works, Vol 3 - Symphonies, Vol 2' Symphony No 1. Dance Symphony. An Outdoor Overture. Statements
BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / John Wilson
Chandos ② CHSA5195 (68' • DDD/DSD)



As with the previous instalment, this third volume of John

Wilson and the BBC Philharmonic's survey of Copland's orchestral music focuses on works from the 1920s and '30s. All remain rarities in the concert hall, even in the States. Such neglect is perplexing in the case of *An Outdoor Overture*, a sweetly tuneful, purposefully sunny score written concurrently with *Billy the Kid* – although, frankly, none of the other pieces is all that challenging, especially in performances as affectionate and refined as these.

Copland described his music of this period as 'hard-bitten', and that's exactly how these pieces come across in the recordings he made with the LSO in

the late 1960s (Sony): gritty and intense, if a bit unruly. Wilson's approach is markedly different, yet eloquent in its own right. Take 'Militant', the opening movement of *Statements*. Copland's performance is strident and sharp-edged; Wilson's is rounded and polished, the BBC Philharmonic strings navigating the angular melodic lines with athletic elegance. In 'Cryptic', the second movement, Wilson finds a reflective, elegiac tone rather than the pained grieving Copland evokes.

In fact, it's in quiet, lyrical passages that Wilson is at his most compelling. Listen, for instance, to the tender delicacy of the passage beginning at 3'38" in *An Outdoor Overture*, or to the magical play of clarinet, harp and strings at 2'18" in the first movement of the *Dance Symphony*. The unflinching exquisite contribution of the BBC Philharmonic's first-desk woodwinds deserves special praise, as does Chandos's engineering, which is airy and detailed as well as thrillingly vivid.

Dorati's incisively dramatic Decca recording (10/82) ties the score back to its roots as a fantastical ballet and remains *primus inter pares*. Wilson's interpretation of the First Symphony, on the other hand, comes as something of a revelation. Copland's rewrite of his *Organ Symphony* to dispense with the organ part has generally been considered inferior. Wilson gave a fine account of the original in Vol 2 (A/16). Here, perhaps to make up for the loss of the organ's powerful sonority, he inspires the orchestra to play with additional intensity. The result is riveting and, best of all, wholly satisfying. All in all, a thought-provoking release. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Garūta

Piano Concerto^a. The Little Doll's Lulling Song. Meditation. Four Preludes. Variations on the Latvian Folk Song 'The Soldiers Are Sorrowful'
Reinis Zariņš *pf*
^aLiepāja Symphony Orchestra / Atvars Lakstīgala
Skani ② LMIC/SKANIO56 (74' • DDD)



For those like me to whom the name of Lūcija Garūta is new, let me tell you (because the discursive booklet does not) that she was born in Riga in 1902 and died there in 1977. She was clearly a considerable pianistic talent, studying with Cortot and Isidor Philipp, while her own composing was much influenced by Dukas, the Impressionists, Scriabin, and the fate of her beloved native Latvia. Garūta's muse

was one of 'vivid drama and fateful tragedy'. (Jāzeps Vītols, Latvia's leading composer and head of the country's Conservatory, once said to her: 'Dear Lucy, just put on some rose-coloured glasses for once and bring me a light and major-key piece with lively figuration'.)

None of which will come as surprise when you hear her Piano Concerto (1951, orchestrated 1955). The first movement sounds as though it has escaped from one of Hyperion's Romantic Piano Concertos with its echoes of the MacDowell D minor and Tchaikovsky B flat minor, the piano often thundering away just audibly below a full-throated brass chorus. It is a very loud concerto and I am not entirely convinced of its musical merit (the third movement sails perilously close to the vacuous rhetoric of the *Yellow River Concerto*) but it is effective enough.

Solo works make up the remainder of the disc. Four Preludes composed over two decades earlier owe a debt to (early and mid-period) Scriabin, each rising to an ecstatic climax, all of them impassioned and, once more, very loud. As in the Concerto, Garūta's compatriot Reinis Zariņš takes no prisoners. I was much taken with the brief (4'39") *Meditation* that follows – originally written for orchestra – and even more so by the *Variations on the Folk Song 'The Soldiers Are Sorrowful'* (1933), the theme and 10 variations making a meaty and highly contrasted concert piece lasting over 19 minutes. One for insatiably curious pianophiles rather than an essential purchase for all music lovers.

Jeremy Nicholas

Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 25, K503; No 27, K595
Chamber Orchestra of Europe /
Piotr Anderszewski *pf*
Warner Classics ② 9029 57242-2 (63' • DDD)



I wonder if Piotr Anderszewski has it in mind to record all of Mozart's major piano concertos. This is his third such coupling; the first appeared in 2002 (Nos 21 and 24 – 4/02), so at this rate he'll be about 80 by the time he finishes. His recordings keep on getting better and better, too – having anyway started out at a remarkable standard – so Mozartians may well be in for decades of treats to come, however piecemeal we are fed them.

Anderszewski habitually pairs a lyrical work with a more dramatic one: the ubiquitous C major, once indelibly

associated with a Swedish film, versus the clarinet-imbued *Sturm und Drang* C minor, followed four years later by the serene G major, No 17, set against the agitated D minor, No 20 (5/06). Here it is the very last concerto – often described as ‘autumnal’ or ‘valedictory’, given its proximity to Mozart’s death (although it may have been started up to three years earlier) – prefaced by the triumphant C major work whose chief motif seems almost to quote the Marseillaise. These have often been thought to signal a departure from the quasi-operatic-ensemble construction of the run of concertos from the mid-1780s, moving towards a more discursive unfolding in K503 and a more simply songlike one in K595. Nevertheless, the wonderful playing of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe shows just how fully the earlier work, especially, is dominated by woodwind conversation and that it can’t be too distantly related to the sound world of Figaro’s ‘Non più andrai’.

Anderszewski’s piano is right there in the middle of it, supporting, chattering away in passagework, never once hogging the spotlight at the expense of his first-desk soloists, and pulling gently against the pulse to coax maximum character from the music without compromising its shapely contours. He is aware, too, of the delicate shading of these works, taking, for example, a minute and a half longer than Maria João Pires (with Abbado) over K595’s slow movement; the sense of awed stillness he achieves here contrasts with her comparatively playful approach, and Anderszewski’s studio conditions show off the COE more finely than the Orchestra Mozart, recorded in concert in 2011. Two years after that Pires performance, Martha Argerich revisited K503 with the same accompanists; Anderszewski is broader in all but the finale than the Argentinian and here provides his own first-movement cadenza, which matches the majesty of its

surroundings while tweaking cheekily at the bounds of 18th-century harmonic propriety. (In the absence of a genuine Mozart cadenza for K503, Argerich uses one by her teacher Friedrich Gulda.)

There are so many moments here that bring a smile to a jaded Mozartian’s face: little holdings back, touches of ornamentation, that magical moment in K595’s slow movement where the piano’s song is shadowed only by flute and violins, exquisitely done here. You may be getting the impression that I rather like this record. I wouldn’t (couldn’t) go without recordings by other longtime favourite pianists (two of whom are invoked above); but then, Anderszewski is a favourite pianist too, and his coupling joins theirs without fear of compromise.

David Thresher

Piano Concerto No 25 – selected comparison:

Argerich, *Orch Mozart, Abbado* (3/14) (DG) 479 1033GH

Piano Concerto No 27 – selected comparison:

Pires, *Orch Mozart, Abbado* (1/13) (DG) 479 0075GH

Mozart • Chopin • Debussy

Mozart Piano Concertos^a – No 23, K488^b;

No 27, K595^c **Chopin** Mazurka No 13, Op 17 No 4^c.

Nocturne No 20, Op *posth*^b **Debussy** *La fille aux cheveux de lin*^b

Menahem Pressler *pf*

^aMagdeburg Philharmonic Orchestra / Kimbo Ishii

AVI-Music © AVI8553387 (78' • DDD)

Recorded live at Theater Magdeburg.

^bMay 15 & 20, 2016; December ^c15 & 16, 2016




I gather that Kimbo Ishii sets a sedate tempo for K488’s opening ritornello to accommodate Menahem Pressler’s 94-year-old hands. Yet when Pressler enters, one immediately takes notice. Over the past few years, this great artist’s dynamic range has narrowed, and his scale passages now

require more effort. Yet Pressler still illuminates whatever he touches and compels you take pay attention. Listen, for example, to the harmonic pointing and sense of direction of his left hand. Notice the operatic orientation and disarming freedom Pressler brings to the second subject; every repeated note has a different colour. As the development unfolds, the Magdeburg Philharmonic’s musicians become increasingly responsive to Pressler’s gentle yet intensely expressive rubatos. Pressler’s diminuendos and tiny tenutos at phrase ends throughout the celebrated slow movement leave you hanging on every note, although I wish that Ishii would have brought out more of the orchestral texture’s counterlines, such as the wonderful bassoon passage at around 1'07". However, it is hard to get past the slow, sluggish and enervated *Allegro assai*.

A similarly slow and intimately scaled K595 yields more consistent and focused results. Pressler achieves a riveting conversational repartee between both hands in the first movement’s development and infuses the finale’s main theme’s nursery rhyme-like nature with a crispness and backbone that younger pianists often flatten out. If the central *Larghetto* emerges more as a *largo*, Pressler’s hypnotic legato, concentration and sustaining power nevertheless impress.

So do the encores. To be certain, he over-pedals the central Mazurka section of Chopin’s C sharp minor Nocturne (the early piece that often pops up as an encore), yet the florid twists and turns of the A minor Mazurka, Op 17 No 4, unfold at leisure with the kind of imagination and tonal magic that remind me of the aged Horowitz in the same work. And Pressler’s curvaceous Debussy encore leads me to suspect that ‘La fille aux cheveux de lin’ is not all that innocent! **Jed Distler**

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Paganini · Wolf-Ferrari

Paganini Violin Concerto No 1, Op 6^a

Wolf-Ferrari Violin Concerto^b

Francesca Dego *vn* **City of Birmingham**

Symphony Orchestra / Daniele Rustioni

DG © 481 6381 (72' • DDD)

Recorded live at Symphony Hall, Birmingham,

^aAugust 21 & 22, 2016; ^bMarch 8 & 9, 2017



DG has a good track record with Paganini's First Violin Concerto: five different

recordings by different artists currently available on the label, which, considering the current paucity of public performances, is remarkable. The best known of these – and for many Paganini lovers still the benchmark – is Salvatore Accardo's first recording with the LSO and Charles Dutoit.

This newcomer, good as it is and with plenty to recommend it, does not displace Accardo. The photogenic Francesca Dego (the booklet goes to some lengths to show just how photogenic) clearly knows her compatriot's recording, even if her slow movement is nearly a minute faster (a decision that beneficially intensifies its operatic narrative). She plays the score without any cuts, has the full measure of Paganini's myriad technical challenges and uses Accardo's version of the Sauret first-movement cadenza, executed with great brilliance and aplomb. The one thing she does not do is send a tingle up the spine in the way that the 18-year-old Menuhin/Monteux, Vengerov/Mehta and Accardo/Dutoit do.

What might very well sway you is the imaginative coupling. If you like Bruch's violin concertos, there's every probability that you will like Wolf-Ferrari's, a late work without any hint of its being written in 1944. If the concerto's themes are not quite as strong as Bruch's, Dego's sweet-toned advocacy shows the work in the best possible light. This is a live performance (attentively conducted, again, by Daniele Rustioni, who happens to be Dego's husband), which compares favourably with that of the concerto's dedicatee, Guila Bustabo, with Rudolf Kempe in 1972.

As for the booklet, I don't know which is worse: the original material or the translation (DG has a track record for this, too). Three examples just from the last paragraph: a violin has a fingerboard (not a keyboard), we use the English spelling of 'Stravinsky' (not 'Stravinkij'), and what on earth is 'hyperkinetic charm'? **Jeremy Nicholas**

Paganini – selected comparisons:

Menuhin, Paris SO, Monteux

(11/34^{re}, 4/16) (WARN) 2564 67770-7

Accardo, LPO, Dutoit (11/75^{re}, 2/87) (DG)

415 378-2GH, 437 210-2GX3 or 463 754-2GB6

Vengerov, Israel PO, Mehta (5/92^{re}) (ELAT)

2564 60013-2; (WARN) 2564 63151-4

Wolf-Ferrari – selected comparison:

Bustabo, Bavarian RSO, Kempe

(3/97^{re}) (DORE) DHR8051/2

Prokofiev

Violin Concertos – No 1, Op 19; No 2, Op 63

Franziska Pietsch *vn* **Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Cristian Măcelaru**

Audite © AUDITE97 733 (50' • DDD)



Turning her back on the recent fashion for mixing Prokofiev's *concertante* and

chamber works and having already recorded the violin sonatas and Five Melodies (Audite, 8/16), Franziska Pietsch settles for the concertos alone. Should that sound ungenerous, the music-making is individual enough to make amends. Stravinsky admired Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto but he might not have cared for the passionate subjectivity of Pietsch's interpretation. Embracing more intrusive vibrato and rasp than most rivals – though Leila Josefowicz (Philips, 12/01) is certainly 'grittier' – this is a compellingly individual account, profoundly lyrical where it needs to be, never cloying.

Without ignoring the music's delicate fairy-tale element, Pietsch often moves the expression into a dangerous territory of real-world emotion which may or may not relate to her own back story as a victim of Communist repression. After her father's defection to the West in 1984, the East German authorities did their best to scupper her own burgeoning career, preventing the prodigy from giving concerts or taking lessons. Once in the West she specialised in chamber music and has experience as an orchestra leader. On disc at least she would seem to have avoided concertos.

The proto-Soviet Second Concerto is paced quite deliberately, though with no trace of heavy-handedness. The adoption of an anxiously confidential manner here has the effect of bringing the two concertos closer together in terms of feeling. Again Pietsch is at pains to shed new light on the music's itinerary. In the second movement she makes less of the central climax than, say, Kyung-Wha Chung (Decca, 3/77), finding a special *Innigkeit* and sense of regret in the final restatement of the arioso

theme. There is no celebration in the finale's final flight.

Pietsch's relationship with the musicians of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin seems close, helped by a fine studio recording made in the ideal acoustic of the Jesus-Christus-Kirche in Berlin-Dahlem. The conductor, himself a violinist, is Romanian-born Cristian Măcelaru, who recently took over the directorship of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music long associated with Marin Alsop. On this evidence he too is someone to watch. You can usually sense whether you're in for a special performance of the D major Concerto even before the soloist enters. Making the most of its opening shimmer entails taking the dynamics down below what the composer actually asks for.

Pietsch was once proclaimed the 'Anne-Sophie Mutter of East Germany'. She hasn't quite the same sovereign command of intonation but her intense commitment is never in doubt. There are plenty of safer, cleaner, more generously coupled alternatives in these concertos – James Ehnes (Chandos, 10/13) springs to mind – but in its mix of tenderness, raw emotion and high fidelity this one is rather special.

David Gutman

Prokofiev

Symphonies – No 2, Op 40^a; No 3, Op 44

State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia / Vladimir Jurowski

Pentatone © PTC5186 624 (73' • DDD/DSD)

^aRecorded live in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, September and October 2016

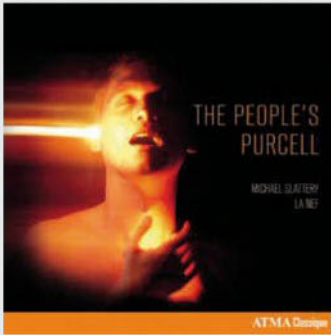


This is the first instalment of yet another Prokofiev symphony cycle in

what has lately become a hotly competitive field. When Vladimir Jurowski previously recorded a stand-alone Fifth for the same label (1/08), its main selling point was the addition of the *Ode to the End of the War*, a Prokofiev rarity scored for a complement including eight harps, four pianos and eight double basses. Nowadays the Moscow-born, German-trained conductor has his own Russian orchestra of which he has been artistic director since 2011 while retaining sundry Western appointments. Fortunately he brings more to the table than residually authentic Russian-Soviet sonority. Tempos are spacious and textures spruce, suggesting a simultaneous repudiation of the coarse, gabbled effect produced by less carefully prepared performances of this repertoire.

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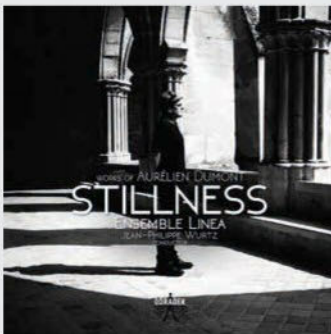
ELQ4824933



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PH292037



PHAEDRA ROBERT SCHUMANN **ARABESKE OP.18, FANTASIESTÜCKE OP.12, GEISTERVARIATIONEN (1854) JOZEF DE BEENHOUWER**

A collection of Schumann's masterpieces, three of them dating back to his turbulent years of 1837-39, while the last, *Geistervariationen*, comes from his late style, when he was seeking new paths and important changes happened in his harmonic progression. Belgian pianist Jozef de Beenhouwer urges you to (re)discover music Schumann composed in the 1850s, often unjustly neglected.

PH 92098



PHAEDRA PIET SWERTS (*1960) **A SYMPHONY OF TREES – AN HOMAGE TO IVOR GURNEY AND YPRES (2017)**

A Symphony of Trees has evolved into an emotional and musical reflection on the battle of Passchendaele. Swerts's oratorio is tied in with the 1917 events at Ypres and Passchendaele but also refers to our present-day, insecure world, its conflicts and theaters of war. The work's imposing structure, the location of the concert recording and the rich content of Gurney's poems all make it an overwhelming and moving experience, as well as a redeeming and deeply human one.

Looking again at Prokofiev's oeuvre in recent years, his partisans have sometimes been keener to laud his stylistic experiments in the West than acclaim his uniquely tuneful, more settled Soviet style. Whatever Jurowski's thoughts, he has chosen to plunge in at the modernist deep end. Prokofiev's Second is a machine-age artefact of 'iron and steel' designed to re-establish his reputation as a futurist at the cutting edge of Parisian musical life. It didn't work for him in the 1920s but does it work for us? Though refinement may not be the first word that comes to mind when assaulted by the opening trumpet calls, I doubt whether so much significant detail has ever been coaxed from the prevailing din. The main theme of the second movement – one of only two in a structure superficially modelled on Beethoven's Piano Sonata No 32 in C minor, Op 111 – is most beautifully handled. Apparently made live at the opening concert of the orchestra's previous Moscow season, the recording sounds shallower than I was expecting. String tone lacks the unforgettable fullness of the Svetlanov era, even if the blare of the brass contributes a Soviet-era sense of living on the edge. Applause is excised.

The Third Symphony is studio-made and feels richer in timbre, its surround sound as lifelike as James Gaffigan's on a rival audiophile label. The Symphony is an operatic spin-off full of great material however randomly stitched together and it can certainly take Jurowski's detailed rethink. While some will miss the hysterical conviction of Valery Gergiev who, like Jurowski, has conducted *The Fiery Angel* in the opera house, it's worth remembering that Prokofiev wanted us to disregard its convent full of panic-stricken nuns. In this sense Jurowski's relative solemnity is by no means misplaced and he coaxes real magic from sonic clutter left unexplored by Gergiev or Gaffigan (both brisker), though the latter has the best bells. Even if Jurowski's band is flattered by the range and depth of the recording, it is rare to hear chamber poise from an orchestra this size in any music, let alone Prokofiev's.

Is it all a little too cerebral? You might think that; I couldn't possibly comment. Collectors loyal to physical format will know that Pentatone has lately improved its packaging: the booklet boasts a helpful introduction from the conductor himself as well as the usual notes and aptly suprematist artwork. **David Gutman**

Symphony No 3 – selected comparisons:

LSO, Gergiev (6/06) (PHIL) 475 7655PM4

Netherlands Rad PO, Gaffigan (1/16) (CHAL) CC72584

Raaff

Violin Concerto^a.

Symphony No 1, 'Tanglewood Tales'^b

^aTasmin Little *vn*

Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra /

Jaap van Zweden, ^bMarcus Stenz (finale)

Etcetera © KTC1593 (54' • DDD)



He is yet to enjoy much profile in the UK but Robin de Raaff (b1968) is

among the leading Dutch composers from his generation and this is at least the sixth disc devoted to his music. Of these orchestral works, the Violin Concerto (2008) shares with that by Berg a memorial function and recourse to a chorale, but the latter emerges early in its long single movement – tempering initial restiveness on the way to a strenuous accompanied cadenza intensified, in turn, by a combative orchestral interlude. From here this piece takes in an angular Scherzo, soulful *Lento* then a Conclusion that draws motivic threads towards an ambivalent close.

Vividly realised and finely orchestrated (Raaff studied with George Benjamin and Julian Anderson at the Royal College of Music two decades ago), there is yet a lack of expressive focus and thematic distinctiveness also evident in the First Symphony. Assembled during 2007–14, its two main movements – contrasting in every respect – evoke the Tanglewood estate, best known as being the out-of-season home of the Boston Symphony. Such a marked disparity between introspection and energy, pensiveness and activity might have seemed too great to bridge, so Raaff added a brief while evocative coda to bring these competing musical states into more meaningful accord.

The performances could hardly be bettered in capturing the flair and intricacy of these works, with the concerto ideally suited to Tasmin Little's sensibility and technique. This is not the best way into Raaff's music (try the Concerto for Orchestra on Etcetera or Third Symphony on Challenge Classics), but those familiar with earlier releases should certainly acquire this.

Richard Whitehouse

Shostakovich

Piano Concerto No 1, Op 35^a.

Symphony No 9, Op 70^b

^aMartha Argerich *pf* ^aJakub Wasczeniuk *tpt*

Sinfonia Varsovia / Alexandre

Rabinovitch-Barakovsky

Fryderyk Chopin Institute © NIFC053 (54' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonic Concert Hall, Warsaw, August ^a19 & ^b28, 2006



Though Martha Argerich first recorded the Shostakovich

Concerto for piano and trumpet in 1993 (DG, 1/95), most fans probably know her performance from the Lugano Festival, recorded in June 2006, with trumpeter Sergei Nakariakov and the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana under Alexandre Vedernikov (EMI, 11/07). The Polish Fryderyk Chopin Institute has just released another version, recorded in Warsaw a scant two months later. Jakub Wasczeniuk is her co-soloist and her long-time collaborator Alexandre Rabinovitch-Barakovsky conducts. Both are live performance recordings.

For me, the new Chopin Institute recording has the edge, first and foremost for its luxuriously lifelike sound. Trumpeters in both the 2006 recordings are crack soloists but Wasczeniuk seems more playfully at home in the work. At the end, the audience goes wild. As a bonus, the Polish recording gives us the second go-round of the antic finale, offered as an encore, if possible even more dazzling and hilariously droll than the first. Finally, there's the leadership of Rabinovitch, who conducts an orchestra more expertly than the vast majority of his composer colleagues. He deserves a share of the credit for this performance's humour and infectious vibrancy.

And Argerich? Sixteen years ago, Alex Ross wrote that his well of superlatives applicable to the 'Dark Lady of the Piano' was running dry. By that time, mine had been sitting on empty for the better part of decade. It is said that Argerich was nearing 50 when she turned serious attention to Shostakovich. We must all be grateful that she did. I know of no other pianist who mines the First Concerto's riches with her depth of understanding, yet delivers it with such consummate ease.

Those who might consider the idea of a 'feel-good' Shostakovich disc a contradiction in terms shouldn't fail to continue listening to the Ninth Symphony. Rabinovitch and the Varsovians give a



Smoothly grooved: Simon Rattle and the LSO programme Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* with works by Ligeti and the Second Viennese School – see review on page 38

technically polished, richly detailed, multifaceted performance that reflects the white-hot intensity with which Shostakovich created the work in the summer of 1945. **Patrick Rucker**

Shostakovich

The *Gadfly*, Op 97. The *Counterplan*, Op 33 (excs) **Bachchor Mainz; German State Philharmonic Orchestra, Rhineland-Palatinate / Mark Fitz-Gerald**
Naxos Film Music Classics (M) 8 573747 (62' • DDD)



That *The Gadfly* (1955) is both tuneful and engaging has sometimes been

taken to reflect Shostakovich's improved political situation following the death of Stalin. In reality it is the best evidence for the autonomy of his art in that its composition coincided with a personal crisis in his family life. Scoring the film, an Italian-set historical drama directed by Aleksandr Faintsimmer (previously responsible for *Lieutenant Kijé*), was the only project he managed to complete between the deaths, a year apart, of his wife and his mother. Khachaturian had

been lined up to provide the music. Shostakovich, only stepping in when his colleague fell ill, responded with his customary versatility and professionalism.

The substantial *Gadfly* Suite prepared by Levon Atovmian has been recorded several times in whole or in part since Emin Khachaturian's Melodiya-sourced recording of the early 1960s (CfP, 4/89). The yet more ubiquitous 'Romance', a cut-and-paste job made famous in the UK by its appropriation for the 1980s ITV spy drama *Reilly, Ace of Spies*, is only present in embryonic form in Shostakovich's original. Daniel Hope with Maxim Shostakovich may have been the first to correct a wrong note in this familiar nugget (Warner, 6/06).

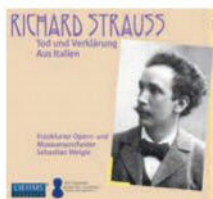
You'll have come across other highlights on one of those mix-and-match compilations of the lighter Shostakovich in which cues culled from movie scores sit alongside material without cinematic connections. The present issue has loftier aims as a successor to Mark Fitz-Gerald's previous Naxos reclamations of film-related Shostakovich, including *The New Babylon*, *Odná* ('Alone') and *The Girlfriends*. It is the first disc to present *The Gadfly*'s original cues complete, now published as Vol 138 of the New Collected Works,

embracing numbers transcribed from the soundtrack by the conductor himself and others dropped from the final cut. The three bonus items are from *The Counterplan* (1932) including the famous 'Song' which made its way into many other works, not all of them by Shostakovich. With lyrics by Harold J Rome it re-emerged as the 'United Nations on the March' finale of MGM's film *Thousands Cheer* (1943).

Should you want just the familiar reworked *Gadfly* there's still a case for Vassily Sinaisky's more opulently recorded, purely orchestral 42-minute suite contained within Vol 2 of his Mancunian Shostakovich film music series (Chandos, 6/04). That said, Fitz-Gerald secures stylish, thoroughly attentive playing in blunter, more immediate sound. Get past the small font and the booklet notes are impressively detailed. If you're in two minds, the oft-recycled 'Bazar' (track 22) will have you hooked. Completists will not hesitate. **David Gutman**

R Strauss

Aus Italien, Op 16. Tod und Verklärung, Op 24 **Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra / Sebastian Weigle**
Oehms (C) OC892 (69' • DDD)



Sebastian Weigle's ongoing series of Strauss's orchestral works – one of

several under way from a variety of sources – is unusual for also including several of the lesser-known pieces. An earlier volume gave us the early F minor Symphony; alongside *Tod und Verklärung*, the latest gives us another chance to hear the composer's musical tour of Italy, *Aus Italien*. It's a key bridge between those earlier symphonic works and the tone poems, a concert-hall rarity that is nevertheless rather well represented on disc.

The virtues of Weigle's conducting and the playing of his orchestra have been clear in earlier instalments, not least a moving, generous *Alpensinfonie* (11/16). The orchestral sound is plump and gratifying, and the players offer easy virtuosity and lyrical splendour, sounding thoroughly at home in a composer they often perform in the pit of the Frankfurt Opera. Weigle, the opera house's music director, conducts both scores with a natural and compelling sense of pacing and symphonic coherence.

These virtues make for a magnificently stirring account of *Tod und Verklärung* in particular. We get plenty of thrills, even though Oehms's sound is mellow rather than brilliant, but also an underlying sense of grandeur, of urgent yearning and ardent belief. It is superbly paced, with the work's many gear changes well judged and seamlessly executed, and with a satisfying weight to the warm and euphonious sonic blend – listen to the lofty, organ-like legato that undergirds the final inexorable build-up. This account doesn't necessarily offer the fierce focus of some, but I can't think of a recent version that is more deeply satisfying and musical, certainly not those that have come from Kent Nagano (Farao, 1/18) or Maris Jansons (BR-Klassik, 4/17).

The vignettes of *Aus Italien* don't offer Weigle quite as satisfying an assignment but the piece nonetheless gets a terrific performance, mixing richness of sound with finely honed detail. Despite some great music, the piece remains something of an awkward hybrid; but this recording, big-hearted and flooded with sunny warmth, makes as strong a case for it as any – even for the finale that Strauss erroneously based on 'Funiculì, funiculà'.

A thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding disc, highly recommended. **Hugo Shirley**

Stravinsky · Berg · Ligeti · Webern



Berg Three Fragments from 'Wozzeck', Op 7^a

Ligeti Mysteries of the Macabre^a

Stravinsky The Rite of Spring

Webern Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op 6

^a**Barbara Hannigan** *sop*

London Symphony Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

LSO Live (DVD + Blu-ray) LSO3028 (85' • NTSC •

16:9 • 1080i • 48kHz/16-bit & PCM stereo • 0)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

January 15, 2015



The long-term nature of the relationship between Rattle and the LSO had not been formalised when this

concert was broadcast by Medici in January 2015 but the auguries were clear and promising to many of us who were present. In the pair of modernist masterpieces from 1910-11 bookending the programme, it was evident that Rattle has lost none of his gift or zest for orchestra-building, even where the foundations are as secure as the LSO's.

Smoothly grooved it may be at times but Rattle's *Rite* is an imposing beast, lacking nothing for impact or sinuous grace; only in their concerts together last September to open his much-heralded tenure did it become clear in retrospect what was missing from this earlier account, where the tone is set by Rachel Gough's almost indecently sensuous opening bassoon solo. The pair of Second Viennese works are more aptly swathed in diaphanous textures: shot-silk strings and some lovely Viennese portamento from the LSO clarinets wrap around Barbara Hannigan's Marie in the excerpts from *Wozzeck*. The climax of the funeral march in Webern's Op 6 is slightly compressed in the Barbican acoustic, even with post-production work on the original film, but the video direction is as restrained and exact as the movement in the score.

It was for this concert that Hannigan refreshed her double act with Rattle in *Mysteries of the Macabre*, replacing the leather-clad dominatrix with a naughty schoolgirl outfit: animé or St Trinian's according to generation and predilection, though both may arouse an uncomfortable have-your-cake-and-eat-it chauvinism as she nails every coo and squawk of Ligeti's two-faced coloratura parody. It's probably best just to sit back and enjoy the show.

Peter Quanttrill

Stravinsky

The Rite of Spring. The Faun and the Shepherdess, Op 2^a. Fireworks, Op 4. Funeral Song, Op 5. Scherzo fantastique, Op 3

^a**Sophie Koch** *mez*

Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly

Decca (CD 483 2562 (70' • DDD)

Recorded live at KKL Luzern, Switzerland, August 16, 17 & 19, 2017



It's only 10 and a half minutes long, but Stravinsky's *Funeral Song* shares top billing

on this new Decca disc and is arguably its *raison d'être*. The work was composed in 1909 for a memorial concert for his erstwhile teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, who had died the previous year. The score was lost soon after its single performance. The composer, in his 1960 autobiography *Memories and Commentaries*, wrote: 'I remember the piece as the best of my works before the *Firebird*, and the most advanced in chromatic harmony ... I wish someone in Leningrad would look for the parts, for I would be curious myself to see what I was composing.'

Stephen Walsh's booklet note recounts the rediscovery of the work, individual parts turning up in the St Petersburg Conservatory in 2015. The first modern performance was given in 2016, by Valery Gergiev and the Mariinsky Orchestra, after which orchestras have scrambled to present the work. This account by Riccardo Chailly and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, taken from a concert last August, is its first recording.

There are signposts towards *The Firebird*, Stravinsky's next orchestral score: double basses judder and slither as if we'd snuck into Kashchei's magical garden; chromatic lines twist and snake; a solo horn is reminiscent of Ivan's appearance. The work, noble and solemn, is a slow procession, solo instruments in turn 'filing past the tomb of the master', in the composer's words. Chailly draws out the colours vividly with his Lucerne orchestra, silky strings and rounded woodwind voices to the fore. The *Funeral Song* is more than a curiosity.

The rest of the disc attempts to set the rediscovery into context but is awkwardly executed. The three works preceding *Funeral Song* – *The Faun and the Shepherdess*, *Scherzo fantastique* and *Fireworks* – are programmed after it, spoiling what could have been a useful chronological sequence. And then, given the obvious links to *Firebird* – Stravinsky even quoted a folk tune in the 'Khorovod' that Rimsky had

employed in his Sinfonietta – Chailly offers *The Rite of Spring* instead. It's a very good performance, slightly more expansive than his Cleveland Orchestra recording, but it lacks the intense savagery of Teodor Currentzis and MusicAeterna, my current top recommendation. Chailly elicits a rhythmic grip on 'The Augurs of Spring' and keeps the 'Spring Rounds' flowing nicely, driving the finale to its exhausted collapse. **Mark Pullinger**

The Rite of Spring – selected comparisons:

Cleveland Orch, Chailly (2/878) (DECC) 473 731-2DF2

MusicAeterna, Currentzis (11/15) (SONY) 88875 06141-2

Tchaikovsky

Violin Concerto, Op 35^a. Variations

on a Roco Theme, Op 33 (arr Cassar)^b

Nemanja Radulović ^{vn/va} Stéphanie Fontanarosa

^{pf} Ensemble Double Sens; ^b Borusan Istanbul

Philharmonic Orchestra / Sascha Goetzel

DG © 479 8089GH (52' • DDD)



'The violin is no longer played: it is tugged about, torn, beaten black and blue.'

Eduard Hanslick's verdict on the premiere of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto has been cited as one of the great critical blunders.

He accused the first movement of 'vulgarity', concluding that it was music that 'stinks to the ear'. It's music that requires great virtuosity and that's precisely what it gets from the French-Serbian violinist Nemanja Radulović on this new disc from DG.

Magic is there from Radulović's first phrase, floating on wings of fantasy as Sascha Goetzel pulls back the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic after their orchestral introduction, followed by a beguiling statement of the main theme. Radulović has a big, muscular tone, with a warm, grainy lower register, but it's a clean sound without overcooking the vibrato. He indulges in teasing rubatos, almost straying beyond the musical line (track 1, 4'29"), hits the accelerator pedal hard (6'10") and scales dynamics dramatically (15'44") but it's playing that's got bags of personality. The cadenza is imaginatively executed, with tasteful use of portamento. Radulović imparts a true *cantabile* to the second-movement Canzonetta, while the finale is an exhilarating dance where only an awkward pause (track 3, 3'55") sounds a miscalculation.

Radulović is given strong support by the Borusan, not as lustrous in sound as the Berlin Staatskapelle accompanying Lisa Batiashvili, but they play with plenty

of brio and Goetzel doesn't pull the tempos around as much as Daniel Barenboim.

The *stringendo* sprint at the close of the first movement is thrillingly paced. Woodwinds are well blended, possibly indulged too much in the finale, but Radulović is sympathetic in response. In recent years, I've enjoyed Esther Yoo's recording the most (also on DG) but this one is rather more dangerous and pumped with adrenalin.

Only a few seconds after the concerto ends, we're into the tentative question-and-response string opening to Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations*. But what's this? A piano providing the answers? Radulović commissioned this arrangement for viola, string ensemble and piano from Yvan Cassar and one has to question the point of it all. The piano replaces the woodwinds and sounds like an alien intruder.

Radulović's viola tone is just as firm and clean as on the violin, but when there are enough Tchaikovsky violin *concertante* pieces to amply pad out a CD – Ilya Kaler's collection on Naxos is still my favourite – this is, at 52 minutes, disappointingly short measure. **Mark Pullinger**

Violin Concerto – selected comparisons:

Kaler, Russian PO, Yablonsky (4/07) (NAXO) 8 557690

Batiashvili, Staatskapelle Berlin, Barenboim

(1/17) (DG) 479 6038GH

Yoo, Philb Orch, Ashkenazy (8/17) (DG) 481 5032



Cavi-music • The Artist's Label



CAVI 8553378

GUSTAV MAHLER: Symphony no. 4
Hanna-Elisabeth Müller, soprano
Düsseldorfer Symphoniker
Adam Fischer, conductor

This is the second volume in the ongoing, successful series of all Mahler's Symphonies played by the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker under the experienced baton of Adam Fischer. Highlighted by Gramophone with an Editor's Choice. "I love that all the Mahlerian exaggerations and heightened contrasts are in almost wilful defiance of the finesse of the reading. [...] The intricacy of detail here (balance, phrasing, dynamics) makes even the familiar sound new and unexpected"



CAVI 8553373

English Viola Music
YORK BOWEN: Sonata no. 1 (1905)
BENJAMIN DALE: Phantasy op. 4 (1910)
FRANK BRIDGE: Pieces (1901-1910)

Here are three works for viola and piano belonging to a generation of musicians who centered their activities around London towards the turn of the 20th century and ushered in a new period blending Late Romanticism with Classical Modernism. All three composers had a particular penchant for the viola's dark and melancholy timbre: the instrument could serve as the perfect exemplar of the fin-de-siècle mood that had taken over the minds and hearts of so many artists.



CAVI 8553387

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART:
Piano Concertos nos. 23 & 27
Menahem Pressler, piano
Magdeburgische Philharmonie
Kimbo Ishii, conductor

At 93, Menahem Pressler, former pianist of the Beaux Arts Trio and a remarkable soloist, is a living legend. His Mozart Concerto recordings here date from 2016. If you are seeking a dogmatically period-practice performance, look elsewhere, but if you wish to hear a vibrant account drenched with pure musicianship and brightness of tone, then this is for you.



CAVI 8553390

GUSTAV MAHLER: Symphony no. 1
Düsseldorfer Symphoniker
Adam Fischer, conductor

The third volume in Adam Fischer's survey of the Complete Symphonies of Mahler, the First, is released in February. It follows the recording of the Seventh Symphony (so hailed by the American magazine Fanfare: "If the symphony's charms have so far eluded you, give it another chance with Fischer and his Düsseldorfers") and of the Fourth, a Gramophone Editor's Choice.

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GRAMOPHONE *Focus*

VICTOR DE SABATA

Richard Osborne admires the Italian conductor's timeless musicianship

Victor de Sabata

'Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon and Decca'

Beethoven Symphony No 3, 'Eroica', Op 55^a

Berlioz Le carnaval romain, Op 9^a **Brahms**

Symphony No 4, Op 98^b **Kodály** Dances

of Galánta^b **Mozart** Requiem, K626^c **Respighi**

Feste romane^b **Sibelius** En saga, Op 9^a. Valse

triste, Op 44 No 1^a **R Strauss** Tod und

Verklärung, Op 24^b **Verdi** Aida - Prelude^b

Wagner Tristan und Isolde - Prelude and

Liebeshod^b. Die Walküre - Ride of the Valkyries^a

^aPia Tassinari sop ^cEbe Stignani mez

^cFerruccio Tagliavini ten ^aItalo Tajo bass ^bBerlin

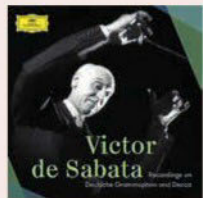
Philharmonic Orchestra; ^aLondon Philharmonic

Orchestra; ^cChorus and Orchestra of

Radiotelevisione Italiana / Victor de Sabata

DG ⑧ ④ 479 8196GM4 (4h 29' • ADD)

Recorded 1939-46



Rarely in the history of the gramophone can so eclectic a mix of works have been

recorded to such thrilling effect in so short a space of time as was the case in Berlin in April 1939 when Victor de Sabata was invited to make six superbly engineered recordings with the Berlin Philharmonic.

With the orchestra itself in Olympian form, the sessions included one of the most kaleidoscopically vivid of all recordings of Brahms's tragic Fourth Symphony, a rendering of Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung* that is peerless in its eloquence, a vivid albeit occasionally hectic account of Kodály's recently composed *Dances of Galánta* and a realisation of Respighi's *Feste romane* that, were it better known, would transform the piece's reputation.

The last is a particular revelation. How crude and uncomprehending Toscanini's 1942 Philadelphia recording is when set alongside this, not least in the concluding Epiphany Eve festivities during which 'La Befana', a soot-stained witch on a broomstick, brings largesse to the children of Rome. A closed book to Toscanini, the music's jazz and cabaret elements are meat and drink to de Sabata, whose own 'choreographic fairytale' *Mille e una notte* (1930) was conceived in much the same idiom. Similarly memorable is

the Berliners' deeply atmospheric account of 'L'Ottobratò' ('October Festival') where we experience the kind of exquisitely voiced *pianissimo* string-playing of which de Sabata was perhaps the first great exponent on record.

The Berlin recordings already exist on two well-transferred Istituto Discografico Italiano CDs (IDIS6406/7) but this is the first time Deutsche Grammophon has reissued all six recordings together, coupling them with the five recordings de Sabata made with the LPO for Decca in Walthamstow Town Hall in May 1946. Sadly, these are rather more problematic.

The LPO famously gave de Sabata a standing ovation after he led them through Berlioz's overture *Le carnaval romain* at their first meeting in April 1946. Listening to this performance recorded a month later, you can hear why. 'Orgiastic' is the word used by the orchestra's principal flute, Richard Adeney, in his absorbing memoir *Flute* (Brimstone Press, 8/09) to describe their playing for de Sabata. A performance of Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* in Bristol was so intense it was met with stunned silence, until a woman screamed, and the applause erupted. The studio performance is a touch calmer.

The London sessions benefited from Decca's fabled 'full frequency' sound, only to be scuppered by the poor quality of the shellac pressings. This over-manicured account of Sibelius's *Valse triste* still sounds as if it's been printed on sandpaper. By contrast, Sibelius's *En saga* now has a positively silken surface. Happily so, since this is a superbly atmospheric performance, more rhythmically intent and more finely coloured than the performance Beecham recorded with the same orchestra in 1939 (HMV, 12/39).

If *En saga* was the high point of the LPO sessions, the *Eroica* was their nadir. De Sabata was a fine Beethoven conductor: witness his 1947 HMV Rome recording of the *Pastoral* Symphony, made as part of a series which,

disappointingly, Warner Classics hasn't seen fit to reissue for this 50th anniversary of de Sabata's death. Sadly, the *Eroica* – the suavely phrased and rhythmically limp first movement in particular – is too much like a dish of exquisitely blended sauces to which the chef has omitted to add the meat. De Sabata, we now know, realised as much and was in despair throughout the sessions.

Altogether more striking is the performance of Mozart's Requiem he conducted in December 1941 in one of Rome's grander basilicas, designed by Michelangelo but completed by other hands: not unlike the Requiem itself. Such was the strength of de Sabata's direction, the engineers of Italian Radio were able to set the substantial choir well back in the acoustic yet still catch the cleanly etched words and contrapuntal lines. The soloists, by contrast, are well to the fore, their diction penetrating and strong. All any performance of this incomplete Requiem can hope to do is summon up that feel of 'forbidding majesty and deep consolation' (Robbins Landon's phrase) which is its principal characteristic. De Sabata's performance does that in spades. Oddly, the 55-minute Requiem has been given a disc to itself, causing crowding elsewhere in the four-CD set and prompting the absurd decision to place the 1946 London *En saga* midway through the 1939 Berlin sequence. It says much for the LPO (and de Sabata) that they survive the juxtaposition more or less unscathed. ⑥



Thrilling recordings made for DG and Decca form a fine tribute on the 50th anniversary of de Sabata's death

Vivaldi • JS Bach



JS Bach Ach, was soll ich Sünder machen, BWV770. Alle Menschen müssen sterben, BWV643. Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV639. Kommst du nun, Jesu, vom Himmel herunter auf Erden, BWV650. Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier, BWV731. Prelude, BWV854 **Vivaldi** Recorder Concertos – RV312(R); RV441; RV442; RV443; RV444; RV445

Stefan Temmingh *rec* **Capricornus Consort Basel**
Accent (P) ACC24332 (69' • DDD)



Given that any new recording of Vivaldi's six recorder concertos inevitably

prompts the question 'Why?', this new offering from the Dutch recorder player Stefan Temmingh stands out for meeting this question square-on in his booklet notes. Reminding us of this core repertoire's peerlessness among the 18th-century recorder repertory, Temmingh asserts it to be 'simply inconceivable' for recorder players not to have their own ideas about them, before concluding: 'It was absolutely self-evident to me that I should record my own interpretations ... and a matter of the heart.' So a confident entrance. Indeed, never before have I heard such a clutch of interpretations which have had me hearing each concerto as if for the first time.

The clever programming helps, because the Vivaldi concertos are each framed by Bach preludes; a device that not only functions as a palette-cleanser but also reminds us of Bach's admiration of Vivaldi, and indeed of both men's willingness to mix sacred and secular musical ideas.

Even without such punctuations the Vivaldis would have offered up successive new worlds thanks to the sheer originality of Temmingh's approach. The cornerstones are the extramusical narratives he's thought up for each concerto, effectively treating each as a three-act mini-opera in the spirit of *The Four Seasons*. For instance, he's read the C minor melancholy of RV441 as sacred thoughts from Vivaldi the priest-turned-composer, its final movement's strange seven-bar theme even perhaps a reference to the seven sacraments or Seven Deadly Sins. His pastoral imaginings on RV442 follow, its bucolic feel emphasised by a continuo combination of triple harp, lute and the zither-like psaltery.

In fact, the presence of a few more unusual timbres across the six concertos' continuo sections is one of the recording's most striking features, because rather than simply choosing from the standard options, Temmingh has considered both what

would have been available to Vivaldi and what might fit with the 'doctrine of affections'. Thus, given that we know there was a psaltery at the Ospedale della Pietà, why not use one? Likewise, the church piety of RV441 demands organ and harp, while the imagined village band of RV312 is ripe for triple harp, theorbo and guitar.

The playing is top-drawer too. Temmingh's virtuosity is breathtakingly fluid and effortless, and he clearly enters a new world for each of his 'mini-operas'. The Capricornus Consort, meanwhile, are light-footed in their dance, Vivaldi's pulsing rhythms never over-articulated even in the temptation of the village-band guitar strums of RV312's final *Allegro*.

Equally striking is the ornamentation. Temmingh's scholarly cues have included the part-book of one of Vivaldi's orphanage pupils (perhaps copied with Vivaldi at her shoulder?), whose sumptuous ornamentations often occupy a wider range than even the original melodies. This is exactly what's delivered for RV443's ornamentally asking-for-it *Largo*, Domen Marincic's recently penned, fantastically florid embellishments soaring from Temmingh's lips for all their worth.

This really is a Vivaldi recorder concerto collection in a class of its own. (Oh, and I also love his florals ...) **Charlotte Gardner**

Wieniawski • Bruch

'Brillante'

Bruch Scottish Fantasy, Op 46

Wieniawski Violin Concerto No 2, Op 22

Janusz Wawrowski *vn*

Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra / Daniel Raiskin

Warner Classics (P) 9029 58084-4 (56' • DDD)

Wieniawski • Shostakovich

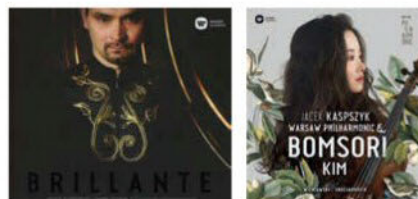
Shostakovich Violin Concerto No 1, Op 77

Wieniawski Violin Concerto No 2, Op 22

Bomsori Kim *vn*

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra / Jacek Kaspszyk

Warner Classics (P) 9029 57632-2 (63' • DDD)



A Polish concerto performed by a Polish soloist and a Polish orchestra ... though not quite on the same disc. Henryk Wieniawski was one of several violin virtuosos, alongside Joseph Joachim and Pablo de Sarasate, who composed for their own instrument. His Violin Concerto No 2 in D minor is probably his most popular work on disc, a grand Romantic concerto which gives the soloist ample opportunity

to display his or her dazzling technique including double-stops and chromatic glissandos. The concerto appears on two new discs, both jostling for company on the very same label. Warner Classics pairs the Polish violinist Janusz Wawrowski with the Stuttgart Philharmonic under Daniel Raiskin, while the young prize-winning Korean Bomsori Kim presents her debut album in the company of the Warsaw Philharmonic under the watchful eye of experienced conductor Jacek Kaspszyk.

Wieniawski spent some seven years working on the concerto and even then he tinkered on it a good deal more after its 1862 premiere before submitting it for publication. It has a great romantic sweep but also draws on Polish folk melodies, noticeably in the dashing gypsy rondo finale. Indeed, Wawrowski's disc, entitled 'Brillante', is released as part of the celebrations to mark the centenary of Poland regaining its independence in 1918.

Both performances are extremely enjoyable, with barely a cigarette paper between them in terms of tempo. Wawrowski has a dark, luscious sweetness of sound, with warm vibrato in the gorgeous second-movement Romance. Bomsori Kim is recorded a little closer, which highlights the odd tonal imperfection but allows her to scale down to a softer *pianissimo*. There is a nice bit of sinew to Kim's playing. Her double-stopping isn't quite as emphatic as Wawrowski's but she has a more lyrical tone. I enjoyed Wawrowski's energetic approach to the finale, where he exhibits a pristine trill, but Kim's more rhapsodic feel is also highly attractive.

If plumping for just one of these discs, your choice may be dictated by the choice of concerto partner. There's a good deal of sense in Wawrowski pairing Wieniawski with Max Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy* as both were dedicated to Pablo de Sarasate. Wawrowski offers a glowing account, Raiskin shaping the orchestral introduction affectionately. There is plenty of verve in the livelier movements, especially the strutting *Allegro guerriero* finale.

Kim, winner of the 62nd ARD International Music Competition, has a more unlikely coupling, choosing Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto, where she is stronger on the introspection of the first movement than the demonic intensity of the Scherzo or the bitterness of the Burlesque finale. She has a wonderfully clean tone, though, and this is a fine reading. The Warsaw Philharmonic offers beefy support, in fuller sound than Wawrowski's Stuttgart recording.

Mark Pullinger

Brahms's Symphony No 2

Conductor **Thomas Dausgaard** talks to **Andrew Mellor** about interpreting this 'delicate animal'

As he began to craft the Second Symphony at his villa in Pörtschach in 1877, Brahms waxed lyrical about rippling streams, blue skies and sunshine. It was the conductor Vinzenz Lachner who first took the composer to task on his apparent inability to give those thoughts free reign in the score itself. 'Why do you toss the rumble of the kettledrum and the gloomy, lugubrious sounds of the trombones and tuba into the idyllic mood with which the first movement opens?' asked Lachner of Brahms. The composer's response culminated thus: 'I would have to admit that I am a thoroughly melancholy person.'

The symphony's dual status as both lion and lamb is one of its most resonant features. But has the balance tipped in favour of the symphony's dark side in recent years, interpretatively speaking? 'Thinking about that doesn't really help me,' says Thomas Dausgaard when I put it to him. 'That's interference on my wavelength. It trespasses on what Brahms wrote.'

Whatever Brahms wrote, we know he admired performances by the Meiningen court orchestra. Dausgaard's new recording with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra on the BIS label, as with the First Symphony (04/13), employs a similarly sized ensemble with single winds and string weight of 8.7.5.5.3. 'Everyone has a different kind of responsibility,' says Dausgaard of chamber-orchestra Brahms. 'A big orchestra thrives on drawing on people's strengths at different times. In a small orchestra, it's life and death for everyone, all the time.'

That opens up some avenues. After more than 20 years together, Dausgaard and the orchestra have developed, in his words, 'a different kind of dialogue'. In Brahms, the proximity of the conversation allows Dausgaard 'to steer the music with even more freedom'. Transparency and clarity are obvious qualities, from a listening perspective. But Dausgaard insists those are mere side effects: 'The real purpose of using a small orchestra is to allow us to appreciate all the music that's there, so that it comes to life in every corner, rather than becoming a mesh of sound.'

The symphony's changeable moods are rooted, for Dausgaard, in its more sophisticated route to jubilation. 'It is a delicate animal which is concerned with the tiniest of contrasts,' he says. 'It's quite happy at the beginning there with the horns, but at the second horn entry it's immediately as if clouds appear. There is a moment of hope with the violins, but then the strings die out towards bar 32 and we're left with a



Thomas Dausgaard brings a chamber-music sensibility to Brahms

roll on the timpani – not even a proper note. We're quickly taken from hope to darkness.'

There is a parallel duality in the symphony's rhythmic games. 'I see much of the first movement as a sort of waltz fantasy,' says Dausgaard. 'But just before fig B, Brahms moves to 6/8, which goes against the triple time, and he pushes through this incredible off-beat conversation. He's struggling to get back into the waltz time from bar 71 and makes this huge hemiola where nobody really knows what's going on. He is exploring techniques used by Beethoven.'

More waltzes take root, notably at fig C ('a passionate, elegiac waltz ending in questions'). But Dausgaard underlines the importance of viewing the movement's long lines. When you plot these lines to their end points, he suggests, tempos decide themselves. But there is work to do on phrasing. 'That's what gives you the sense of direction. Look at fig F. It's the same theme as the one at fig C but in a different guise; we have to phrase it differently because the context has changed.'

Conventional wisdom would suggest that the clarity of a small orchestra pays off when Brahms gets seriously contrapuntal. 'Yes, but it doesn't happen by itself,' counters Dausgaard. 'It's a challenge to play with the different characteristics that I want from bar 204. There's one broad



The historical view

Brahms

Letter to Eduard Hanslick, summer 1877; quoted by Max Kalbeck, 2nd edn (1912)

It will also be a way of thanking you if this coming winter, say, I have a symphony played for you and if I make it sound so carefree and so lovely that you will think I wrote it specially for you or even for your young wife!

Eduard Hanslick

1878 review trans H Pleasants in Music Criticisms 1846–99 (Penguin Books, 1963)

I cannot adequately express my pleasure ... that Brahms, having given such forceful expression to the emotion of a Faustian struggle in his First ... has turned again to the spring blossoms of earth in his Second.

Peter Korfmacher

Booklet note (2013) for Decca 478 5344 (Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch / Chailly)

Because the opening is so unpretentious and seemingly bland, conductors of recent decades have devised ever-new ways to charge it with energy. It has been pumped and twisted, vibrated and inflated.

marcato line, then against it there's this very angry bom-bom-bom-bom in the lower strings, and against that there's this hemiola in winds and brass, with a different character again. As a small orchestra we have to be even clearer about creating a three-dimensional experience there. It takes energy to carve out, but that's also the joy of it: to build a drama of disagreement.'


In Dausgaard's score, there is a forest of scribbles appended to the opening page of the *Adagio*: 'My mind has changed so many times,' he laughs. But he has a consistent view of the movement as 'a melting pot of the spiritual or the religious'. Towards its conclusion, at bar 101, he has written the word 'glow'. 'It goes into a corner here, the pizzicatos in the basses need to carry the weight of the whole movement and release that energy into the last chord somehow,' he explains. 'So it needs a glowing quality, but from something other than vibrato. We want to invite you into the space between the instruments, to see to the bottom of the texture as through still water. Too much vibrato can obscure that. We've found a way of doing it using a slow, tense bow stroke.'

'This stillness can go one of two ways: it can end, or there can be hope. There's a moment of doubt, but yes, we're saved'

Dausgaard consulted Walter Blume's account of Fritz Steinbach's Meiningen performances, which proved inspiring on matters of phrasing and lightness; he cites specifically the push-and-pull of the third-movement *Allegretto grazioso* and the lightness of the Haydn-like games in the finale.

Phrasing is rarely more exposed than in the carefully threaded opening to that movement (*Allegro con spirito*). Again, the delicacy is in the detail. 'Suddenly in bar 5, the lower strings are tiptoeing; suddenly there is a bit of dissonance in bar 8; there's a sudden drop at bar 13 where another register is possible.' Dausgaard draws a parallel with the finale of Mozart's *Paris* Symphony: 'We want the overall feeling here to be of enormous tension, so you can hardly breathe before the orchestra explodes. You master it by working on those shadings and inner workings. That goes for the whole symphony.'

The misplaced rhythms that ensue constitute Brahms 'with a twinkle in his eye' for Dausgaard. But from the look of his score, things get serious before the recapitulation; over bar 234 he has pencilled the words 'facing death'. 'This stillness has a feeling of something other-worldly,' he says. 'It can go one of two ways: it can end, or there can be a seed of hope. There's a moment of doubt, but yes, we're saved.'

After the drama of the recapitulation itself, we arrive at the coda. 'The trombone and tuba are the carriers of a Hungarian dance turned nasty, accompanied by these triplets – a wild ride akin to Schubert's *Erlkönig*,' says Dausgaard. 'Again, it can go awfully bad or we can be saved in the last moment – the symphonic argument creates that danger. You have to build it carefully towards this most brilliant ending, fanfares from all corners of the world. I think of the day Brahms had the idea to have the trombones lay down those sustained notes across the orchestral chords from the fifth-to-last bar – what a happy day that was.' Lachner's gloomy, lugubrious beasts are transformed. Or are they? 

► To read our review of Dausgaard's Brahms Symphony No 2 disc turn to page 31

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Harriet Smith listens to the Artea Quartet playing Schubert:

'Each of the Artea's members is so in demand that quartet-playing has taken something of a back seat' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 47**



Richard Bratby gets to know Gautier Capuçon's latest disc:

'Popper's Elfentanz zips by in a hummingbird whirr of iridescent colour and needlepoint precision: spectacular playing' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 50**

JS Bach

'Variations on Variations'

Aria variata, BWV989. Canzona, D588. Goldberg Variations, BWV988. Passacaglia, D582 (all arr Alessandro)

Concerto Italiano / Rinaldo Alessandrini *hpd*
Naïve ⑤ OP30575 (68' • DDD)



'Variations on Variations' sees Rinaldo Alessandrini take keyboard works

by JS Bach which adopt the variation as their generating musical principle, then vary them further himself by reworking them for the Concerto Italiano chamber forces of violin, viola, cello and violone, him directing from the harpsichord.

Alessandrini's own introductory words are, 'What you hear makes no pretence at orthodoxy. It is, rather, a divertissement, a subtle intellectual pleasure.' However, that's rather playing things down, because while there is subtlety here, it's a subtly wrought brilliance that's far more than mere divertissement. Equally, this is far from an orthodoxy-free zone, as becomes eminently clear if you consider his *Goldberg Variations* in the context of the two other notable existing transcriptions of it: Sitkovetsky's arrangement for string trio (with Sitkovetsky on violin, Mischa Maisky on cello and Gerard Causé on viola – Orfeo, 8/86, 12/86), and Labadie's string-orchestra arrangement for Les Violons du Roy (ATMA Classique).

Take the opening Aria, where, far from pulling up the variations' harpsichord roots, Alessandrini thoroughly beds them down by beginning with the solo harpsichord of the original. Then, when the instrumentation does flower out into ensemble writing, the original's austere grace has been absolutely nailed, Antonio de Secondi's violin tenderly singing the melody line to the gentle swells of the bare-bones strings accompaniment. There's a harpsichord-faithful amount of air between the notes too, thanks both to their forces being considerably leaner than those

of Les Violons du Roy and their smooth but just detached enough articulation. The harpsichord then maintains a firm presence throughout the subsequent movements, bringing a strong overall sense of cohesion to their switches between full ensemble, two instruments plus basso continuo, and two instruments minus bass; textural variety which Sitkovetsky's trio, excellent though it is, can't match.

The harpsichord Passacaglia in C minor, BWV582, the A minor Variations for harpsichord, BWV989, and the organ Canzona in D minor, BWV588, make up the rest of this most authentic of inauthentic transcription projects.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Beethoven

'The Complete String Quartets, Vol 4'

String Quartets – No 2, Op 18 No 2; No 7, Op 59 No 1; No 12, Op 127

Elias Quartet

Wigmore Hall Live ② ② WHLIVE0089 (112' • DDD)
Recorded live, November 1, 2014



You can tell a lot about a performance of Beethoven's Quartet Op 18 No 2

from its first bar. It's all in those eight demi-semiquavers. Clockwork mechanism or fantastical flourish? Reviewing the first disc in the Elias Quartet's Beethoven cycle (4/15), Peter Quantrill remarked that the Eliases 'observe a certain classical propriety', and nothing in this latest release wholly contradicts that. The articulation is crisp and neat, the textures refined and transparent.

But there's a lot more going on, too. First violinist Sara Bitloch scoops up those eight notes and gives them a little twirl, leaning ever so slightly forwards into the top of the phrase. An unmistakable fantasy is at work here; the subtlety and affection of the group's playing (and the finale is quite irresistibly springy) is coupled to rhythmic drive and a questing collective imagination. As PQ put it, their classicism

doesn't tame Beethoven's wildness but places it in its proper context.

So in Op 127 the opening chords function as a springboard, rather than a gatepost. The relationship between fast and slow in this movement never quite stabilises; instead, the Eliases find deep emotion between the cracks – teasing it out, lingering but never wallowing. They move purposefully through the great *Adagio*, and the aching sweetness of Sara and (cellist) Marie Bitloch's top registers makes for moments of melting beauty. Op 59 No 1 is perhaps the most unconventional interpretation here. The Eliases' first movement is predominantly lyrical rather than argumentative, throwing the weight of the conflict on to Beethoven's huge *scherzando* second movement. In the *Adagio*, there's an intensely inward sense of four distinct personalities articulating a shared tragedy.

All in all, though, I'd say that first bar of Op 18 No 2 sends exactly the right signals about this set: its combination of intelligence and imagination, and, above all, its sense of wonder at this music and the worlds it opens wide. Comparisons are invidious, but after such loving, inquisitive performances the Alban Berg Quartet's 1980s set (EMI/Warner) – my standard reference – felt extremely forceful (I don't say foursquare). The sound quality is excellent, and you mightn't realise that these performances were recorded live until you hear the applause. At which point you might well be moved to join in. **Richard Bratby**

Brahms · Schumann

Brahms Piano Quintet, Op 34

Schumann Piano Quartet, Op 47

Hrachya Avanesyan, Boris Brovtsyn *vns*

Diemut Poppen *va* **Alexander Chaushian** *vc*

Yevgeny Sudbin *pf*

BIS ⑤ ⑤ BIS2258 (65' • DDD/DSD)



There's no lack of personalities on display here, but unlike the recent *Trout*



Rhythmic and structural grip: Hagai Shaham, Arnon Erez and Raphael Wallfisch give one of the best Dvořák 'Dumky' Trios on record

Quintet, indubitably led by Anne-Sophie Mutter (DG, 12/17), here we have a band of equals. As you might expect if you've encountered Yevgeny Sudbin's life-enhancingly bonkers Scarlatti sonatas, there's plenty of buoyancy to be found in the *Allegro* section of the first movement of the Schumann. While some favour a more emotionally ambiguous approach to the *Sostenuto* introduction, here the shadows are largely banished, in keeping with their sunny view of the movement as a whole. The players are thrillingly daring in the Scherzo, taken at a breakneck tempo with fizzing accents, but though you suspect that Sudbin is the ringleader here, there's plenty of give and take within the group, and the string pizzicatos come through the texture well.

You might find more sheerly beautiful accounts of the cello's glorious melody in the slow movement (from Gautier Capuçon with Argerich, for instance) but I like their sense of solemnity, and when the violin takes over the melody the contributions from the other strings are nicely audible. The finale is another highlight and goes with a real swing. In fact, some might find it too breathless, in which case Melnikov and the Jerusalem Quartet might be more to your taste, never sounding rushed and offering some quiet playing of the utmost

finesse. But it's difficult to resist a reading that offers such optimism as it drives full-pelt towards the double bar line.

It is in the Brahms F minor Quintet that I have some reservations. Subdin et al seem intent on proving the composer can sound as light and airy as the next man – which of course he can – but there are points where the playing could have been more rapt: for instance the passage from 6'35" (track 5), where the Artemis and Andsnes allow us to pause and enjoy the glories of Brahms's sound world. In the second movement, too, there's an insouciance which doesn't perhaps fully convey the depths of Brahms's muse.

Some performers seem to have in mind the sound of a firing squad when playing the Scherzo, but not here, in this thrillingly lithe account, in which accents are strong but not overbearing. Hough and the Takács are a tad steadier here, which might initially seem less thrilling, but Brahms's quiet writing is lustrous indeed. And again, if I missed the intensity that some find in the introduction to the finale, Sudbin and his colleagues positively dance their way through the remainder of the piece.

Harriet Smith

Schumann – selected comparisons:

Argerich, R & G Capuçon, Chen
(10/07) (EMI/WARN) 389241-2

Jerusalem Qt, Melnikov (7/12) (HARM) HMC90 2122
Hope, Neubauer, Finckel, Han (7/15) (DG) 479 4609GH
Brahms – selected comparisons:
Artemis Qt, Andsnes (4/07) (VIRG/ERAT) 395143-2
Takács Qt, Hough (1/08) (HYPE) CDA67551

Dvořák • Grieg • Schumann

Dvořák Piano Trio No 4, 'Dumky', Op 90 B166

Grieg Andante con moto

Schumann Piano Trio No 1, Op 63

Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch

Nimbus © NI5968 (71' • DDD)



There's much to admire in the Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch's

interpretation of Schumann's D minor Trio: the expressive shaping of trills and ornaments (especially from violinist Hagai Shaham), scintillating articulation and warm phrasing. And, of course, the work itself is astonishing in its brilliance – that sudden, spectral stillness at the centre of the first movement (where the strings play *sul ponticello*) never fails to take my breath away. Yet this performance doesn't entirely satisfy. The outer movements require greater abandon – more *Energie und Leidenschaft* (energy and passion) and

Feuer (fire) – while the slow movement is so sluggish it's nearly impossible for the players to sustain their lines in the hushed tone Schumann demands. Turn instead to the 1958 recording by Gilels, Kogan and Rostropovich (DG) and, despite the constricted sound and odd instrumental balance, Schumann's wild genius bounds from one's speakers.

In Grieg's recently rediscovered *Andante* (the slow movement of a projected trio), again, the trio play expressively. But this piece was written as a lament for the death of the composer's daughter; and when one hears the obsessive, vertiginous character wrenched from the music by the Grieg Trio (Simax, 8/09), this new account, too, feels inadequate.

Happily, the Shaham Erez Wallfisch's performance of Dvořák's *Dumky* Trio is an utter delight – one of the best on record, in fact, which is saying a lot. Throughout, they have fun with the music and make the most of its soulfulness while always maintaining a tight rhythmic and structural grip. Listen to how they pounce on the down-beats of the first movement's *Allegro*, allowing them to spring joyously from phrase to phrase. The dotted rhythms in the second dumka have an articulate expressivity that's almost like speech, while the third deftly balances earthiness and delicacy. And in the finale, there's light-hearted ferocity that, heard in concert, would surely bring down the house.

Nimbus's recording places the listener close to the musicians, as if one had front-row seats in a small hall. If you have a soft spot for the *Dumky* Trio, this disc is worth your while, though its couplings are not nearly as delectable. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Laks • Shostakovich • Ullmann

'Voices of Defiance'

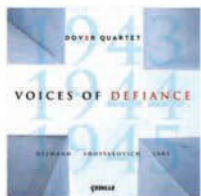
Laks String Quartet No 3

Shostakovich String Quartet No 2, Op 68

Ullmann String Quartet No 3, Op 46

Dover Quartet

Cedille © CDR90000 173 (73' • DDD)



With extremism once more an ever-present fact of life, the timing of this disc, featuring three string quartets protesting Europe's previous great engagement with fascism, is acutely relevant. Viktor Ullmann's Third, written just before boarding the train from Terezín to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943, contains a fiery fugue on a 12-note subject

(he had attended Schoenberg's lectures and studied with Zemlinsky, so this was no accident). Szymon Laks, who survived 30 months in Auschwitz, based his Third (1945) on Polish folk songs, banned under the Nazis. Both works are exploratory, Ullmann's descending into the abyss, Laks clambering wounded out of it, and make an extraordinarily moving pair.

This is not the first appearance of Shostakovich's Second (1944) – the largest and finest quartet here – on this label, nor in a context of contemporaneous music. The Pacifica Quartet recorded it in their 'Soviet Experience' cycle, received with muted enthusiasm in these pages. The Dover are the more compelling, though not as intense as the Emerson (or as well recorded) or the Borodin. The Shostakovich is central to the Dover's conception, though, as it was the work they wanted to build the programme around. Its expressive complexity – the music wears a forced smile throughout – sits neatly with the Ullmann and Laks (different tyranny, same ambivalent terrain) and the Dover Quartet capture its range of moods very well.

The recorded sound, by comparison to its main rivals, is a little flat but every detail can be heard and the close miking does give a very intimate feel (especially on headphones). If the Dover do not outstrip the Nash Ensemble in the Ullmann, their pacing of the Shostakovich is convincing, although broader than the Emerson. They are technically excellent – listen to their dispatch of the pizzicato Scherzo of the Laks. Well worth investing in. **Guy Rickards**

Shostakovich – selected comparisons:

Borodin Qt (3/86) (MELO) MELCD100 1077*

Emerson Qt (6/00) (DG) 475 7407DC5*

Pacifica Qt (8/12) (CED) CDR90000 130

Ullmann – selected comparison:

Nash Ens (4/13) (HYPE) CDA67973

Mahler • Mozart • Schumann

Mahler Piano Quartet Mozart Piano Quartet

No 1, K478 Schumann Piano Quartet, Op 47

Berlin Piano Quartet

RCA Red Seal © 88985 43257-2 (63' • DDD)



The Berlin Piano Quartet offer an unusual line-up of composers, including the only complete movement of Mahler's teenage Piano Quartet. They are particularly successful here, conveying the fervency of its opening idea without over-emoting (which the Maiskys are

wont to do on their live performance at the 2012 Lugano Festival), and they imbue the second chromatically infused idea with a pleasing naturalness that makes the best possible case for Mahler's slightly clunky writing. He tends to overwork these two motifs but the Berlin subtly vary them and the violin's minicadenza (track 4, from 10'02") is nicely done by Christophe Horák; Daniel Hope is freer with his portamentos, in keeping with a performance that is more overtly emotive, but I find the Berlin's 'straighter' approach persuasive.

Competition hots up in the remaining works – and this is the second Schumann Piano Quartet to have come my way this month (see page 44). G minor always inspired in Mozart music of a particularly personal anguish and the K478 Piano Quartet is no exception. The Berlin face formidable competition from the Lewis/Leopold account, which to my mind is pretty much ideal. In the first movement's stern opening idea, for instance, Lewis & co phrase it off tersely, which makes its softer-edged reappearance, newly harmonised, all the more striking. The Berlin are gentler from the off, slightly playing down this contrast. But the Berlin's pianist, Kim Barbier, is very sensitive to Mozart's sound world, whether accompanying the strings or taking the lead, and the balance between the players speaks of close rapport. If they can't quite match the apparent simplicity that Lewis & co bring to the sublime slow movement, they bring to the bucolic finale a delightful mix of delicacy and playfulness.

In the Schumann the outer movements have due effervescence. They do sound a touch steady in the Scherzo compared with Sudbin et al – not simply a question of speed but of accentuation too. Nor do they match the finest readings of the slow movement, which is affectionate but sounds a little too respectful: I wanted Bruno Deleplaire to lean into that wondrous tune with a little more passion, as David Finckel and Gautier Capuçon both do in their respective accounts.

Harriet Smith

Mozart – selected comparison:

Leopold Stg Trio, Lewis (10/03) (HYPE) CDA67373

Mahler & Schumann – selected comparison:

Hope, Neubauer, Finckel, Han (7/15) (DG) 479 4609GH

Mahler – selected comparison:

L, S & M Maisky, Chen (8/13) (EMI/WARN) 721119-2

Schumann – selected comparisons:

Argerich, R & G Capuçon, Chen

(10/07) (EMI/WARN) 389241-2

Avanesyan, Brovtsyn, Poppen, Chaubian, Sudbin

(2/18) (BIS) BIS2258

Messiaen

Quatuor pour la fin du temps

Martin Fröst *cl* Janine Jansen *vn*

Torleif Thedéen *vc* Lucas Debargue *pf*

Sony Classical © 88985 36310-2 (47' • DDD)



Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* (1940–41) is arguably the 20th century's

most startling musical portrayal of social and spiritual extremes, with its alternating depictions of ferocious apocalypse and paradisaical serenity. In essence, it is a devout Catholic's response to internment in a Nazi detention camp, and Nigel Simeone's excellent booklet notes succinctly narrate what is now known about the extraordinary circumstances of its creation and first performance.

The Quartet has been much recorded in the CD era but I can't recall another version that so persuasively favours the ferocity over the serenity. Martin Fröst's introductory comment that 'the music is still as relevant in today's political climate as it was in 1941' suggests that these performers might be especially responsive to the piece's secular context alongside its vibrant spiritual aura. The two most

contemplative movements, the slow meditations for violin and piano and cello and piano, have active intensity as well as contained eloquence here, and both are played significantly faster than more explicitly spiritualised accounts. The coordinated virtuosity of the movements involving all four players is projected with maximum rhythmic force, and Fröst's performance of the extended clarinet monody finds potent drama in the contrasts between the improvisatory birdsong phrases and the desolate lament that frames them.

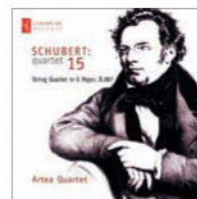
This is a remarkably vivid and well-balanced recording – for once, the very soft cello harmonics in the first movement can actually be heard against the richly spaced piano chords. The overall effect might be controversial in probing the score for every hint of disquiet and unease but no one can doubt the relevance (Fröst's word) of the result. Perhaps his point is that classical music – at least in its modernist phase – needs to be angry as well as seductive to have the best chance of surviving within an increasingly populist culture. **Arnold Whittall**

Schubert

String Quartet No 15, D887

Artea Quartet

Champs Hill © CHRC137 (54' • DDD)

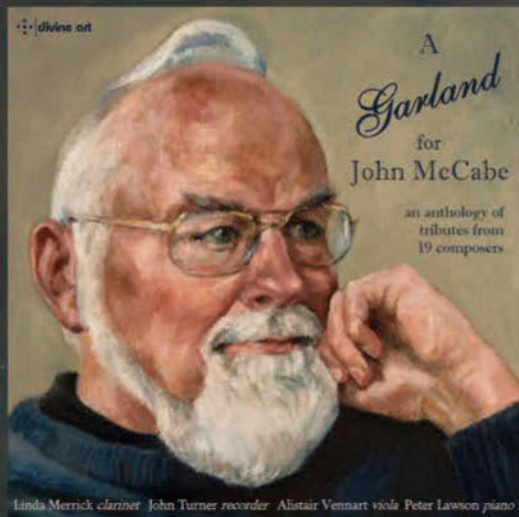


The Artea Quartet have been playing together for 15 years so it's a neat choice

to record Schubert's 15th Quartet. The irony is that each of its members is so in demand that quartet-playing has taken something of a back seat, which makes the decision to record this of all works either brave or foolhardy, depending on whether the results appeal.

The vast plains of Schubert's opening movement unfold at an unhurried pace, which is not a problem if the reading is sufficiently gripping. But there were times when I hankered after more forward impetus (for instance, from 5'21" in the first movement), while the tremolo passage that leads back into the exposition repeat sounded relatively pain-free, compared to the edge-of-madness conjured by some ensembles.

In the *Andante*, too, I felt the reading was just too slow. How much more natural the recent Doric performance sounds by comparison. But it's not merely down to the pacing: the Artea are more conventionally warm in the opening theme, the Doric altogether more intriguing in



dda 25166

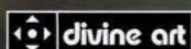
Linda Merrick *clarinet*
John Turner *recorder*
Alistair Vennart *viola*
Peter Lawson *piano*

A Garland for JOHN McCABE

with works written in tribute by

Peter Dickinson
John Joubert
Edward Gregson
Robert Saxton
Howard Skempton
Elis Pehkonen
Robin Walker
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Martin Ellerby

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DANIEL HARDING

SWEDISH RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

GUSTAV MAHLER SYMPHONY NO. 9

Although a valedictory mood underpins it, Mahler's Ninth Symphony offers above all a profound meditation on the fate of humanity and seems to exude an immense love of life. Sustained by the commitment and excellence of the artists, this recording reveals the formal, technical and orchestral modernity of a work that was to exert a genuine fascination on the Viennese composers of the following generation.



their spectral colouring. To put it in context, the Artea's account is at the opposite end of the spectrum to the Belcea's, so if you find that too raw by half, then this might be more to your taste.

Comparison with the Melos Quartet is also interesting as, in essence, they're not worlds apart. Yet listen to the Scherzo and how much more spirited the older group sound; the Artea only really come to life in the bucolic Trio, which is charmingly coloured, its Ländler-like mood irresistible.

But in the finale fresh doubts arise as they fail to capture the opening motif's minor-major nervousness and underplay the drive and the drama of the movement as a whole. It doesn't have to be fast to work (though how potent the Belcea are here); the Melos are not dissimilar in speed but reveal more of the slithering instability of the main theme, while allowing the inner voices more prominence. A pity, as this slight miss-hit is beautifully recorded.

Harriet Smith

Selected comparisons:

Melos Qt (12/92) (HARM) HMA195 1409*

Belcea Qt (12/09) (EMI/WARN) 967025-2

Doric Qt (2/17) (CHAN) CHAN10931

Telemann

Trio Sonatas, TWV42 - a1; a4; d10; F8; f2.

Duet, TWV40:111

Erik Bosgraaf rec **Dmitry Sinkovsky** vn

Balázs Máté vc **Alexandra Koreneva** hpd

Berlin Classics © 0301006BC (52' • DDD)



Look down the recording details at the back of the average CD and it's rare to

find the hour of day listed alongside dates and venue. However, time has been included here, and you can see why when it reads, 'Recorded during the late nights of July 3 and 4, 2016, at the chamber music hall of Eszterháza Palace'. In other words, the warmly characterful space in which we're hearing some of the music Telemann himself was most proud of is the deserted palace at the witching hour. Pretty atmospheric, no? In fact I'd even go so far as to say that such knowledge does actually enhance your listening experience.

The pleasures of this album by no means stop at atmospheric imaginings either, as one might expect from one of the most interesting and versatile recorder players on the scene, and indeed one known for his Telemann. For big-picture stuff, there's the fluid freedom of his playing and the beautifully wide, airy sound he produces on his Meyer-made Denner and Jaillard copies.

Then there's the balance and mutual awareness of the partnering between him and Dmitry Sinkovsky, himself one of early music's most interesting characters with his three-pronged career as baroque violinist, conductor and countertenor.

The programme also has added interest in musicologist Thimo Wind's new continuo parts to the Trio Sonata in D minor, TWV42:d10, replacing the manuscript's unison-octave-heavy writing: crimes against the rules of counterpoint which have been used as proof this isn't Telemann at all, but which this recording suggests are simply cack-handed doctorings of a now-lost Telemann original.

The 'encore' is great too: Telemann's B flat duet TWV40:111 for solo recorder and violin, where in the *Scherzando* Sinkovsky turns a falling four-note idea into a joke by sliding down it, which Bosgraaf then mimics with his answering ideas, before the pair slide increasingly tunelessly downwards to the phrase's end, petering out as they go, if they'd suddenly run out of batteries.

This may be Telemann at the midnight hour, but the performances are as fresh as 10am. **Charlotte Gardner**

'1948'

'Russian Works for Cello and Piano'

Lyadov Prelude, Op 11 No 1 **Myaskovsky** Cello

Sonata No 2, Op 81 **Prokofiev** Cello Sonata,

Op 119 **Shaporin** Five Pieces, Op 25

Laura van der Heijden vc **Petr Limonov** vc

Champs Hill © CHRC136 (71' • DDD)



Prokofiev's Cello Sonata begins with a melody low on the C string, and no expression markings: just the instruction *piena voce* (full voice). So it's hard to explain exactly why Laura van der Heijden makes it sound and feel quite so right. Perhaps it's because she doesn't strive for effect. Van der Heijden's tone is handsome, and her vibrato opens out to inflect the top of the phrase before the line slips without fuss beneath the piano's answering melody. There's a naturalness about her approach, as well as a certain earnestness – at any rate, she sounds like she takes the piece seriously.

That's particularly relevant to a disc inspired by Zhdanov's January 1948 attacks on Soviet composers: Prokofiev's sonata has sometimes been cited as proof of a declawed composer toeing the party line. That's not how it comes across here. Van der Heijden and Limonov are eloquent, reflective and

(in the outer sections of the second movement) playful. Compared to, say, Matt Haimovitz's recent account (Pentatone, 12/17) it feels reserved; but it's an interpretation that takes nothing for granted, pregnant with things unsaid. One to live with.

The rest of the programme is imaginative: Myaskovsky's Second Sonata actually dates from 1948 but you wouldn't guess, and van der Heijden pours out beautifully moulded lyricism by the yard before giving a real sting to the tail of the finale. She finds a tragic side, too, to the rather dour romanticism of Yuri Shaporin's Five Pieces. Limonov is clearly on the same page throughout, though the recording gives the piano a slightly tinny, distant sound – more of an issue in the Prokofiev than the other pieces. Otherwise, a thought-provoking debut disc from an impressive and intelligent young cellist.

Richard Bratby

'Deux'

Bartók Violin Sonata No 2, Sz76

Dohnányi Waltz from Delibes' Coppélia

Poulenc Violin Sonata **Ravel** Tzigane

Patricia Kopatchinskaja vn **Polina Leschenko** pf

Alpha © ALPHA387 (53' • DDD)



In the moments before pressing play on any new recording from Patricia

Kopatchinskaja, the only thing you can be absolutely certain of is that you're about to hear something brimming with personality, individuality and panache; in fact sometimes so much personality that a quick glance at the score is in order, simply to establish exactly what the ratio of Kopatchinskaja versus composer-in-question actually is.

'Deux' is no exception to this rule, which I say with unreserved admiration, because every reading here works like a dream; no doubt in part because the three main works' Hungarian folk roots are a perfect partner to her own Moldovan folk heritage. I'm also thrilled to see the notes highlight the two female violinists connected to these works: Jelly d'Arányi, dedicatee of both Ravel's *Tzigane* and Bartók's two violin sonatas, and the French prodigy-turned-adult-star Ginette Neveu, who premiered Poulenc's Violin Sonata in 1943.

The Poulenc makes for an explosive disc opener too, its every mood realised to apotheosis-esque degree: nimbly manic and scratchy-textured when first it explodes into life, followed by the slinkiest and

flirtiest I've ever heard from its second, lyrical section. More pleasures await in the exquisitely tender *Intermezzo*, and also in what is a rollicking, often runaway ride of a Tea-for-Two finale. The album isn't called 'Deux' for naught, either, because Leschenko not only matches Kopatchinskaja in every mood and approach but is a thoroughly, deliciously equal partner in the overall balance.

Next up the Bartók, consisting of a quietly dangerous, don't-turn-your-back-on-it *Molto allegro*, followed by an excitingly unpredictable, technically immaculate *Allegretto*. Then as for *Tzigane*, well, t'ain't subtle, that's for sure, but given that it's hardly smoothly suave, indoors Ravel to start off with, why not untame things further? Particularly when you can do so with such glitteringly perfect technique, intonation and kaleidoscopic colours as Kopatchinskaja can, whether slowly and huskily snaking around her lower registers, dancing like a fleet-footed folk fairy up at the end of her fingerboard or firing off pizzicato clusters reminiscent of popping candy. Leschenko's entry warrants special mention too, because it's electric stuff: hypnotically rhythmic, and with a smartly ringing, luminous touch that brings the piano deliciously close to the cimbalom. Then from the pair of them a wild, thundering, fever-pitched hoedown of a climax.

Add Leschenko's solo turn – a swirling, twinkle-toed reading of Dohnányi's *Coppélia* Waltz arrangement – and this album is a properly exciting, life-affirming box of delights.

Charlotte Gardner

'Flame'

Debussy Violin Sonata. *Beau soir* (arr Heifetz)
Fauré *Après un rêve*, Op 7 No 1 (arr Birtel)
Messiaen *Thème et variations* **Ravel** Violin Sonata No 2 **Stravinsky** *The Firebird* – *Berceuse* (arr Dushkin) **Szymanowski** *King Roger* – *Chant de Roxane* (arr Kochanski)
Gwendolyn Masin *vn* **Simon Bucher** *pf*
 Orchid © ORC100075 (51' • DDD)



It must be said that both the title and cover artwork of 'Flame' are of a

decidedly 'we're giving you no clues here' variety. However, if your tastes are in any way inclined towards the chamber music of early-20th-century France, then Masin and Bucher's programme will be of interest.

The disc opens with Claude Debussy's Violin Sonata, to which Masin brings some lovely shaping as well as a distinctive grainy

tone, and the courage to bite in and even bring a bit of rough when the moment feels apt. This is most striking in the *Allegro vivo*'s final bars, where she produces a truly primitive-sounding tone in the glissando top Gs and A flats. This is thought-provoking rather than unpleasant, but if you're after Gallic elegance then you'll prefer Renaud Capuçon's recent recording with Bertrand Chamayou (Erato, 12/17).

The disc's final work is the Ravel Sonata, and there's much to enjoy here. Take the second movement, where Masin's strumming has a fabulous easy swing within its control, and her arco jazz wails are direct in tone and seductively shaped.

Then, while the five works that lie between may be *morceaux*-size, they sit here as a sophisticatedly perfumed set thanks to the way in which Masin and Bucher make them flow from one to the next as a series of little emotional and stylistic dovetails. Fauré's 'Après un rêve' is unexpectedly affecting, Bussine's original stanzas feeling so present in Masin's playing that it truly does feel like a song without words. The inclusion of Szymanowski's 'Chant de Roxane' is also nice, reminding us that France wasn't the only place where composers were being influenced by Oriental sounds.

All in all, an expertly cohesive programme full of charms. **Charlotte Gardner**

'Intuition'

Anonymous *El cant dels ocells* **Ducros** *Encore*
Dvořák *Lasst mich allein*, Op 82 B157 No 1. *Silent Woods*, Op 68 No 5 B173 **Elgar** *Salut d'amour*, Op 12 **Fauré** *Après un rêve*, Op 7 No 1 **Joplin** *Original Rags* **Massenet** *Thaïs* – *Méditation*
Paganini *Variations on One String* **Piazzolla** *Le grand tango* **Popper** *Elfentanz*, Op 39
Rachmaninov *Vocalise*, Op 34 No 14
Saint-Saëns *Carnaval des animaux* – *Le cygne*
Sollima *Violoncelles, vibrez!* **Tchaikovsky** *Andante cantabile*, Op 11
Gautier Capuçon *vc* with
Benoît Grenet *vc* **Jérôme Ducros** *pf*
Paris Chamber Orchestra / **Douglas Boyd**
 Erato © 9029 58839-5 (82' • DDD)



'Intuition, by Gautier Capuçon': it sounds like an aftershave, and it's a curious title for

a distinctly counterintuitive collection of encores and miniatures for cello. No one by now expects Capuçon to wear his heart too extravagantly on his sleeve. But even so, I don't think I've heard the *Méditation* from *Thaïs* played with such reticence.

That's his approach to most of the slower numbers in this collection: 'restrained',

'fragile' and 'eloquent' are my notes next to his performances of Rachmaninov's *Vocalise*, Tchaikovsky's *Andante cantabile* and that old Casals favourite *El cant dels ocells*. Dvořák's *Silent Woods* and Fauré's 'Après un rêve' perhaps respond most satisfyingly to Capuçon's reserve, though here as in several other numbers (the choice appears to have been fairly arbitrary) Capuçon has orchestral accompaniment. The Orchestre de Chambre de Paris is sleek and alert in Giovanni Sollima's post-minimalist squib *Violoncelles, vibrez!*, but it's generally placed a long way behind the cello and at times veers towards Mantovani. Saint-Saëns's 'Le cygne' really doesn't need orchestral backing.

Listen to the livelier items, however, and it's like hearing a different disc – particularly when they feature the pianist Jérôme Ducros, whose rhythmic crispness and extrovert musical personality strike sparks off Capuçon in pieces by Scott Joplin, Paganini (Capuçon hits the high notes with a delightfully aristocratic swagger) and his own *Encore*. Popper's *Elfentanz* zips by in a hummingbird whirr of iridescent colour and needlepoint precision: spectacular playing by any standards. And Nadia Boulanger would surely have enjoyed the neoclassical elegance that the pair bring to her pupil Piazzolla's *Le grand tango*. Unless you're a committed Capuçon fan, though, it all adds up to a disc with an oddly split personality. **Richard Bratby**

'La sonate de Vinteuil'

Debussy Violin Sonata **Hahn** *À Chloris*.
L'heure exquise **Pierné** Violin Sonata, Op 36
Saint-Saëns Violin Sonata No 1, Op 75
Maria Milstein *vn* **Nathalia Milstein** *pf*
 Mirare © MIR384 (66' • DDD)



In search of *la petite phrase*: what Francophile wouldn't be

fascinated by a recital devoted to the various real-life works that might have been the model for the violin sonata by the fictional composer Vinteuil in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*? It's an enchanting idea, and it's only surprising that more duos haven't taken advantage of it prior to this debut disc by the sisters Maria and Nathalia Milstein.

It doesn't quite do what it says on the tin. Franck's Sonata (a prime candidate) is missing, and Debussy's late Sonata – a work with more tenuous Proustian connections – closes the disc. We do, however, get Gabriel Pierné's much less familiar Sonata, Op 36, and it's exquisite: very much in the



Gwendolyn Masin and Simon Bucher with a cohesive, mostly French programme full of charms

tradition of Saint-Saëns's First Sonata, the disc's centrepiece, and played by the pair with gleaming panache coupled to an affecting inwardness.

These are appealing qualities, and they characterise the whole disc. Maria, on violin, can bring the requisite brilliance when required (the sweep up to the end of the first movement of the Pierné is magnificent), but her sound in quieter passages has a tremulous, almost vocal quality. And although Nathalia, on piano, has a luminous tone and gives a clearly defined character to her rhythms, there's an intimacy – an instinctive ebb and flow – about the pair's interplay that makes everything here feel like real chamber music.

They charge Debussy's central *Intermède* with an intense theatricality, changing tone-colour by the phrase and almost by the note. But they handle the long lines of the Saint-Saëns with equal assurance, and play two Reynaldo Hahn song transcriptions with unaffected sweetness. A disc with which you might well fall in love. **Richard Bratby**

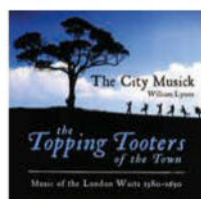
'The Topping Tooters of the Town'

'Music of the London Waits 1580-1650'

Adson Courtly Masquing Ayres - No 18, 'The Bull Maske'; No 20; No 21 **Allison** Psalm 68

Anonymous The Black Almain. The Earl of Essex Measures. The Old Almain. The Quadran

Pavan. The Queen's Alman. Tinternell. Turkeyloney **Dowland** Psalm 100 **Hausmann** All ye who love **Holborne** The Cecilia Almain. The Cradle. The Lullabie. The Night Watch. Paradizo **Morley** Crewell you pull away too soone. Hould out my hart. See, see, myne owne sweet jewell **P Philips** Pavane dolorosa. Galliard dolorosa **Playford** Halfe Hannikin. Lilliburlero. Maiden Lane. Pauls Wharf. Sellengers Rownde **Ravenscroft** Psalm 117 **Stubbs** Psalm 149 **The City Musick / William Lyons** Avie © AV2364 (50' • DDD • T)



William Lyons's brief but telling booklet notes for 'The Topping Tooters of the Town' read like a passionate cry of protest. His period wind ensemble, The City Musick, is, after all, named after London's 16th- and 17th-century 'waits' and the disc is in many ways an attempt to restore this much-maligned genus of performers to their rightful place in musical history.

Books, plays and popular history would have us believe that town waits were little more than nightwatchmen with a curious sideline in music-making. But, as Lyons reminds us, the best among them were skilled artists, not just policing civic life with their instruments but playing for

theatrical performances and religious services as well as masques and dances. The waits' repertoire gives us a wonderfully vivid snapshot of the era, and the variety of genres here in turn generates a generous range of style and instrumental textures, thanks both to original scores and some new arrangements by Lyons himself.

Recorders provide skittish, agile voices for the madrigalian counterpoint of dances such as the anonymous *Tinternell* and the intriguingly titled *Turkeyloney* (sadly the booklet offers no explanation), but really come into their own in a sequence of contemplative works by Anthony Holborne, including the charming *The Lullabie* and *The Cradle*. Rasping shawms and dulcians as well as some resonant bagpipes bring colour to the folk dances (including a familiar selection from Playford). A quartet of voices joins them for the psalm-settings, singing in the dull-vowelled, strongly accented folk style of a Thomas Hardy adaptation, while the gilded tones of cornetts and sackbutts add a sense of civic occasion and spectacle to proceedings.

Precise (except where blowsy imprecision is an atmospheric decision) but always characterful, this attractive disc wears its historical knowledge and skill lightly enough to appeal well beyond a specialist audience. I bet, though, it's even more fun live. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Gerald Moore

Graham Johnson pays fond tribute to the English pianist – his friend and mentor – famed for his pioneering approach to song accompaniment, which he elevated to the status of high art

There are a few individuals whose celebrity is such that their names have become synonymous with their professions. Gerald Moore (1899-1987) is just such an iconic figure. The venerable Sir Landon Ronald had advised the youngster to specialise in the art of accompaniment, a somewhat despised calling at the time, a chore beneath the notice of even moderately gifted pianists, much less aspiring virtuosos. Sensing an emerging market in a changing musical world, Moore embraced this calling without sacrificing his self-respect – on the contrary, he relished the chance to occupy the hot seat of the great composers who had almost all accompanied their own songs. By the mid-1920s he was playing for everybody in a field where there was very little serious competition – from the beginning he set a new standard. The demanding English tenor John Coates earned the neophyte's undying gratitude for bullying him into becoming an expressive artist; Feodor Chaliapin was his first superstar, and he also partnered countless other singers and instrumentalists, recording with many of them. 'Leave the boy alone, Dame Nellie,' said the HMV boss Fred Gaisberg when the intemperate

Australian diva blamed Moore for the deficiencies of one of her students – but he was well able to look after himself. He insisted that his name should be on the record label, hardly the practice of the time; an epithet suggesting a factotum – 'at the piano' – was replaced by the single word 'piano'. When told by Frieda Hempel to cut the famous postlude of Wolf's 'Ich hab in Penna einen Liebsten wohnen' because it took attention away from the singer, he refused to comply. A studio assistant at Hayes, Walter Legge, seven years younger than Moore, went on to become the Diaghilev of the recording industry. Legge became the accompanist's avid supporter (and sparring partner): 'Each note a chubby oyster' is how

he admiringly described the sound that Moore made at the piano – attributing it to his well-cushioned fingertips. Through Legge and the London Lieder Club he came into contact, during the earlier 1930s, with a host of great artists from abroad – Elena Gerhardt, Alexander Kipnis and Elisabeth Schumann among many others.

By 1939, after years of apprenticeship, Moore possessed a hard-won, and scarcely rivalled, expertise. By 1945, his principal rival, the once all-powerful Michael Raucheisen, had been rendered unemployable by Germany's defeat in the war (Moore's tales of recording in Berlin in 1938 were chilling). His

primacy as a song accompanist was now undisputed, although there were always pianists who were better at soothing the egos of opera stars (and hosting dinner parties), and chamber musicians who could boast more thunderous techniques. Artists such as Dame Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (later married to Legge), Victoria de los Angeles and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau lined up to work with the master. Carnegie Hall audiences, including Holocaust survivors, were mollified to see the young

German baritone partnered by an older Englishman of Churchillian build, a team that seemed to embody a new European consensus. Meanwhile, back at home there was a succession of world-class British singers – from Kathleen Ferrier in the late 1940s, to Janet Baker in the late 1960s – who rejoiced in Moore's collaboration and friendship. His beloved wife, Enid, was indispensable to his happiness and success.

His emergence as a witty lecturer and autobiographer set the seal on the kind of world fame unattained by those who wished to emulate him. He made this profession seem attractive and honourable to such a large number of gifted players that naming his successor became all but impossible. Moore was a king who left behind him,

*He was a king who left behind him,
in typically enlightened fashion,
a healthy republic of accompanists*

DEFINING MOMENTS

• 1913 – *Emigration: accompaniment beginnings*

He emigrates with his family to Canada, where he begins his life as an accompanist, returning to London in 1919.

• 1921 – *Start of long career with HMV*

Begins recording for HMV in Hayes, Middlesex. Between 1929 and 1939 he becomes the leading British accompanist.

• 1943 – *The Unashamed Accompanist*

Publishes his first book – based on lectures he delivered at the National Gallery, London, in the preceding war years, at the invitation of Dame Myra Hess.

• 1951 – *Teams up with Fischer-Dieskau*

Begins his long association with the baritone culminating in the survey of 500 Schubert Lieder issued by DG in the early 1970s.

• 1962 – *Publishes another book*

He publishes his autobiography *Am I Too Loud? Memoirs of an Accompanist* – a worldwide success translated into many languages.

• 1967 – *Farewell recital in London*

February 20: gives a sell-out recital at the Royal Festival Hall, though continues to work in the recording studio until the mid-1970s.

• 1987 – *Dies aged 87*

March 13 (Hugo Wolf's birthday): dies peacefully in his sleep in his cottage in the Chiltern Hills of Buckinghamshire.



PHOTOGRAPHY: ERICH AUERBACH/GETTY IMAGES

in typically enlightened fashion, a healthy republic of accompanists. He was undoubtedly lucky to be in the right places at the right times (working at the height of the LP era he recorded, mainly with Fischer-Dieskau and Schwarzkopf, vast tranches of the song repertoire), but quite apart from his musical acuity, it is his loyalty, urbanity and hilarious companionship that are lovingly remembered. He had a knack of serving his singers without becoming a slavish facilitator. His last public performance was at the QEH in 1975 when he came out of retirement to join me and the Songmakers' Almanac (affectionately known as 'Moore's

Young Almanac' – a name officially adopted for the title of his 80th birthday concert at Wigmore Hall four years later) in our unofficial debut – duet accompaniments for Schumann's *Spanische Liebeslieder*. Geoffrey Parsons, a stellar accompanist,

30 years younger, was struck by the unique sound that the old boy effortlessly projected into the hall, and he congratulated him afterwards. 'Old accompanists never die, they simply fake away,' Moore joked. 'But I'd ask you not to repeat that to anyone out there; they will all too readily agree.' **G**

Turn to page 104 for the Specialist's Guide to accompanists

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



A Tribute EMI/Warner (6/03; 7/69^R; 5/67^R) Including the 1967 farewell recital featuring de los Angeles, Fischer-Dieskau and Schwarzkopf in wonderful Rossini, Schubert, Wolf et al.

Instrumental



Patrick Rucker is impressed by Paavali Jumppanen's Debussy:

'Sparks flying and the trajectory of rockets in "Feux d'artifice" seem viewed from every conceivable vantage' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 57](#)



Richard Whitehouse on the piano music of Sadie Harrison:

'The technical finesse and interpretative insight of the four pianists featured is enhanced by the realistic sound' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 59](#)

JS Bach

Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, BWV1001-1006

Midori *vn*

Accentus ② ACC20403; ③ ACC10403
(152' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O • s)

Video director **Andreas Morell**

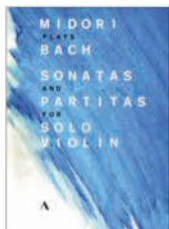
JS Bach

'Sei Solo'

Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, BWV1001-1006

Boris Begelman *vn*

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi ② 88985 46611-2
(138' • DDD)



How to get close to the authentic Bach has been both Midori and Begelman's starting point for tackling this much revered and recorded Everest of the solo violin repertoire, and their respective solutions to this age-old conundrum are strikingly different.

First up Midori, with a DVD filmed by Accentus on which she brings the music 'home' to the castle at Köthen where Bach wrote it, performing it in the castle's various rooms. The idea is a nice one, and it's equally nice to be able to watch the immersed concentration on Midori's face as she puts in her graceful, heartfelt, neatly ornamented and technically superb performances, all couched within a timeless stylistic playing approach. However, there's ultimately something rather emotionally removed about this whole package, and part of the problem here is actually the castle itself; because while once certainly it teemed with the footsteps of Bach and his music, and a whole lot more human colour and mess besides, these days it's a sparsely furnished museum in which Midori plays marooned among glass display cases. It's like playing in Sleeping Beauty's lifelessly

slumbering castle, and that sense of disconnection continues with the five short interviews where her gaze is focused on an off-camera interviewer; she never looks us in the eye. Add some rough editing and camerawork, and although the sleek packaging's promise that 'music and space merge exclusively in the acoustic offered by location' is partially realised – it is fascinating the way the violin works in these intimate-sounding rooms – you nevertheless emerge feeling rather dissatisfied.

Begelman's thoughts on Bach meanwhile come not from the (beautifully engineered studio) acoustics of his surroundings but from his own inner obsessions over the private personality who produced these masterpieces. 'I would like to know what he was thinking about, serenely sipping his beer in the evening', he muses in his booklet notes. 'What grief and despair did he experience at the loss of his child? Yet, strict and reserved, Bach looks down at me from the famous Haussmann portrait, barring my way into his inner world'; and if you've never had similar imaginings yourself, Begelman's subsequent readings should lead you down that dream track. Full, strong and vibrantly toned, technically superb and beautifully ornamented, these are fresh and immensely human-sounding in contrast to the divine quality we hear from Midori. Dance movements energetically propulse forwards, never losing sight of the rhythmic metre even when giving it a playful tweak. Then there are the truly introvert moments. The vulnerable nakedness of the C major Sonata's *Adagio*, for instance, with its vibrato-less *piano*, notes barely sustained, all of which makes the subsequent fugue's direct tone and tiny injection of vibrato carry especial power. Then there's the famous D minor Chaconne, because from the moment Begelman's bow bites the strings for his clipped and punchy opening chords you realise that this is not an interpretation with heavenly aspirations but one articulating the painful buzzings of a human mind not remotely at rest; if this

was indeed an epitaph to Bach's deceased wife, Begelman hasn't given us spiritual grieving acceptance but, instead, 'why?'.

One final thing. If you want a visual from Begelman to compare with the Midori, his streamed album contains a joyful bonus encore of the E major Partita's Gavotte filmed in the Kunsthau Zurich (Museum for Modern Art); so another museum, but artfully filmed, acoustically warmer, with Begelman himself sauntering through it as he plays, clearly at ease with his musical and physical surroundings. **Charlotte Gardner**

JS Bach

JS Bach Partita No 2, BWV826. Italian Concerto, BWV971. Preludes and Fugues – BWV847; BWV872; BWV875 JS Bach/Busoni Chaconne

Simone Leitão *pf*

MSR Classics ③ MS1665 (57' • DDD)



Simone Leitão's pianistically orientated Bach interpretations may

not be the last word in stylish rectitude, yet they're inherently musical. Note the conversational feeling she conveys in the part-writing throughout the C minor Partita's Allemande and Courante, her unusual left-hand phrasings in the Rondeaux and the headlong Capriccio's perky yet unexpected accents.

To be sure, Leitão's brisk tempo for the *Well-Tempered Clavier* Book 1 C minor Prelude yields momentary blurring, in contrast to her deliberation over the Fugue, with its oddly convincing tempo fluctuations. Her chiaroscuro voicings almost transform the Book 2 C sharp major Prelude into a kaleidoscope, while the Fugue recalls Glenn Gould's *détaché* attitude. However, the pianist's studied point-making in the *Italian Concerto*'s first movement fails to propel the music forwards; nor does she separate the slow movement's melody and accompaniment with the mesmerising textural distinction characterising the recordings by Angela



Midori turns to the Everest of the solo violin repertoire, Bach's complete Sonatas and Partitas

Hewitt (Hyperion, 3/01) and Murray Perahia (Sony Classical, 12/03). Leitão's left hand comes to the fore in her sprinting finale, although occasional heavy patches of articulation cause the basic tempo to ever so slightly decrease over time. Following a delightfully dashing Book 2 D minor Prelude, Leitão enlivens the Fugue's alternating triplet and duplet phrases with a sense of 'swing' that is better heard than described.

Leitão begins the Bach-Busoni Chaconne slowly and steadily, and lightens up in time for her supple octaves at the 2'44" mark. While the pianist's smartly interwoven tempo relationships and assiduous transitions unify the reading well, it takes time for her tone to open up and for Busoni's grandly upholstered virtuoso challenges to attain their large-scale potential and power. Reservations aside, Leitão's best Bach-playing abounds with imagination and soul. **Jed Distler**

JS Bach

'Bach to the Future'

JS Bach Clavier Büchlein für WF Bach, BWV855a - Prelude^a. Flute Sonata, BWV1031 - Siciliano^a. French Suite No 2, BWV813. Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV639^b. Jesu Christus, unser Heiland, BWV665^b. Nun komm, der

Heiden Heiland, BWV659^b. Orchestral Suite No 3, BWV1068 - Air^a. Solo Violin Partita No 1, BWV1002 - Bourrée^c. Solo Violin Sonata No 2, BWV1003 - Andante^b. Solo Violin Sonata No 3, BWV1005 - Largo^c. Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV645^b (arr ^bBusoni, ^cSaint-Saëns, ^aSiloti)

Sabine Weyer *pf*

Ars Produktion ©  ARS38 245 (62' • DDD/DSD)



Don't believe this recital's 'Bach to the Future' title, for Sabine Weyer's full-throated and colourful pianism is decidedly 'old school'. That said, her interpretations are uneven. Weyer foursquarely treads through the four Bach-Busoni chorale prelude transcriptions, with heavy accents to spare. One can predict the sectional ritards throughout the C minor *French Suite*'s opening Allemande, while vague articulation of ornaments occasionally throws the Courante's steady pulse out of kilter.

Weyer's tone beautifully comes into focus in the Sarabande, although her basic tempo slackens as the music unfolds. While she plays the Air and Menuet quite

well technically, Weyer's right hand dominates and her left hand stays parked in neutral. You'll hear what's missing in Weyer's Gigue if you compare her generalised execution alongside Murray Perahia's sharp pointing of the dotted rhythms (DG, 11/16).

For the most part, everything comes together in the Bach/Siloti selections. Meyer's arpeggiated chords in the Siciliano are bewitchingly variegated, while her fast and fluent pacing for the B minor Prelude contrasts with Alexis Weissenberg's icy protraction (EMI/Warner). Her parsing of the block chord accompaniment throughout the *Andante* from the A minor Violin Sonata is steady but never rigid, although, again, a heavy, emphatic hand threatens to weigh down the graceful surface of the D major Orchestral Suite's Air.

Weyer's concentrated deliberation casts an Apollonian shadow upon Saint-Saëns's thick-textured rewrite of the First Violin Partita's Bourrée that couldn't be more different from Ossip Gabrilowitsch's faster, snappier rendition on an ancient shellac disc. Saint-Saëns dips the Third Sonata's *Largo* in chordal taffy, and Weyer duly revels in its pianistic succulence, as should all listeners. **Jed Distler**



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2 CD



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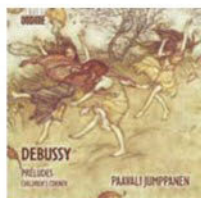
CD HMM 902256.57

Debussy

Children's Corner. *Préludes*

Paavali Jumppanen *pf*

Ondine Ⓟ ② ODE1304-2D (105' • DDD)



This fascinating new two-disc set of Debussy, superbly recorded by Ondine, presents the bona fides of the Finnish pianist Paavali Jumppanen as a musician of keen intelligence and almost preternatural sensitivity. One of the most striking aspects of his approach to this thrice-familiar repertoire is a predilection for extremely spacious, unrushed tempos. Yet as soon as you notice this, it becomes apparent that his choice of tempo is perfectly conceived for what he has to say in the music, which is a great deal indeed. I would hesitate to describe Jumppanen as a colourist, at least in the conventional sense usually applied to pianists. What he does possess is an infinitely calibrated dynamic range which surely must be the envy of his colleagues. This finely delineated command of the subtlest whisper through the most robust proclamation, in combination with an unusually acute sense of proportion, is what lends his performances their life, breadth and originality.

In 'Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir', for instance, time seems suspended, almost forcing you to listen and breathe. Strumming guitars and the wailing of a flamenco singer build to a sinister intensity in 'La puerta del vino'. Sparks flying from spinning pinwheels and the trajectory of rockets in 'Feux d'artifice' seem viewed from every conceivable vantage: on a clear, balmy summer's night; through the distorting panes of a window; muted by a lowering fog; through the gossamer strands of a spider's web. And I don't know another 'Cathédrale engloutie' whose architectural splendour is more thrillingly glimpsed as sunlight penetrates water's gently shifting prism.

This is not the sort of music-making that immediately grabs you. In fact, the first response to any given piece may be to wonder at the particular interpretative choices involved. But after listening to only a few bars, it becomes difficult to imagine how it could be played any other way. **Patrick Rucker**

Glass

Complete Piano Études

Jeroen van Veen *pf*

Brilliant Classics Ⓢ ② 95563 (143' • DDD)



The Dutch pianist Jeroen van Veen rarely does things by half measures. His nine-disc 'Minimal Collection' (Brilliant Classics, 2009) remains one of the most authoritative surveys of piano music in this genre. More recently, his recording of Simeon ten Holt's epic multi-piano post-minimal classic *Canto ostinato* (Brilliant Classics, 2014) clocked in at just under four hours.

This time the focus is on Glass's complete set of 20 *Piano Études*. Van Veen is quite brilliant in the quirky fourth and his reading of the exquisite, valedictory 20th is excellent. He also manages to capture the dark menacing character of the 11th while imparting an appropriate sense of grandeur to the processional 15th.

Elsewhere, however, the numbers don't add up. (Indeed, neither do the numbers add up in the case of Glass's date of birth, which is given in two places as 1968.) In general, van Veen's tempos are too slow. The warning signs are already there in the second Étude, but it is more problematic in the seventh, which lacks fluency, and the ninth, which lacks energy. In comparison, Víkingur Ólafsson's animated ninth (DG, 4/17) is over a minute shorter. To be sure, Ólafsson's general control of tempo in the Études is fast but even Maki Namekawa's altogether more cautious approach (Orange Mountain, 2/15) ensures that the music's general shape and flow is maintained, such as in her fine performance of the 12th. The only exception is van Veen's reading of the 18th, which, if anything, is too fast.

In other respects, van Veen plays things very much by the book, fastidiously observing slurs, phrasing and pedalling; but while his literal interpretation of the 'dots on the page' may render many of these performances accurate, the music often fails to spring fully into life.

Pwyl ap Siôn

Granados

Goyescas. Zapateado. Ochos Valses poéticos.

Allegro de concierto, Op 46

Xiayin Wang *pf*

Chandos Ⓢ CHAN10995 (70' • DDD)



After her quite exceptional accounts of both Rachmaninov

sonatas (8/14), Xiayin Wang turns her attention to the rather different but hardly less virtuoso world of Granados. A good programme (albeit faced with stiff competition in *Goyescas*), well recorded (albeit in the slightly too resonant empty acoustic of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York) and convincingly played (albeit with some reservations).

Both books of *Goyescas* (1909-12), as their subtitle 'o Los majos enamorados' suggests, are essentially sensual and/or passionate love poems, something that Xiayin Wang conveys with sensitivity and obvious affection. But, for me, there is something lacking when compared with the benchmark recordings of *Goyescas*, Alicia de Larrocha's 1976 account for Decca being *primus inter pares*. Wang's are, unmistakably, studio recordings, with 'Los requiebros' and 'Coloquio en la reja' rarely lifting off the page. 'El fandango de candil' is enchantingly done but hear how Garrick Ohlsson with less pedal more clearly defines the fandango rhythm and its persistent triplet figure – both of them, incidentally, significantly slower than the composer on a convincing 1913 Welte & Soehne piano roll (Pierian 0002). The most famous number of the set (here entitled 'The Maja and the Nightingale' rather than 'The Maiden ...'), though adroitly paced, is prone to exaggerated expressiveness, unlike the account by Eileen Joyce (see page 60) who, at a similar tempo, manages most touchingly to find more of Granados's *melancólico* precisely by not playing the *melancólico* card.

The early eight *Valses poéticos* are played with innate charm and empathy but Stephen Hough, with more tonal variety and subtler pedalling, is even more alluring (and – a small point – observes the repeat in the *Presto-Vivace* No 8, which Wang does not). The two unalloyed successes come before and after these: 'Zapateado' (the last of the *Six Pieces on Spanish Folk Songs*) and the *Allegro de concierto*, both exhilarating and exuberant, making one regret the fact that more pianists don't programme Granados, and exuding an infectious spontaneity more consistently in evidence than elsewhere.

Jeremy Nicholas

Goyescas – selected comparisons:

Larrocha (12/77, 4/96) (DECC) 448 191-2DF2

Ohlsson (4/12) (HYPE) CDA67846

Ochos Valses poéticos – selected comparison:

Hough (12/06) (HYPE) CDA67565

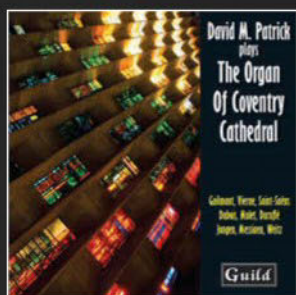


At the centre of these world premiere recordings is what is believed to be the only surviving work of Franz Xaver Hassl (1708–1757), a composer barely known to us these days, Hassl wrote the trio sonatas whilst director of music at the Prince-Bishop's court in Pruntrut/Porrentruy where they were most likely performed within an ecclesiastical setting. The sonatas are framed by three sacred arias found in a song collection by Zurich's town trumpeter, Johann Ludwig Steiner (1688–1761) and a selection of canzonettas by Johan Freidrich Agricola (1722–1774) illustrating the secular side of this charming 'galant' music.

Ulrike Hofbauer, Soprano
L'Arcadia:
Claire Genewein, flute
Martin Jopp, violin
Katie Stephens, cello
Daniele Caminiti, theorbo/archlute
Anne Marie Dragosits, harpsichord/organ

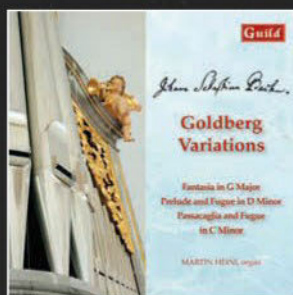
GMCD 7806

RECENTLY RELEASED



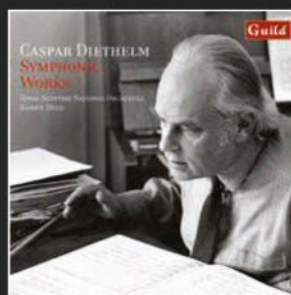
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GMCD 7801



A different take on a familiar work: Martin Heini plays Bach's *Goldberg Variations* on the delightful organ of Horw Church, Switzerland.

GM2CD 7805

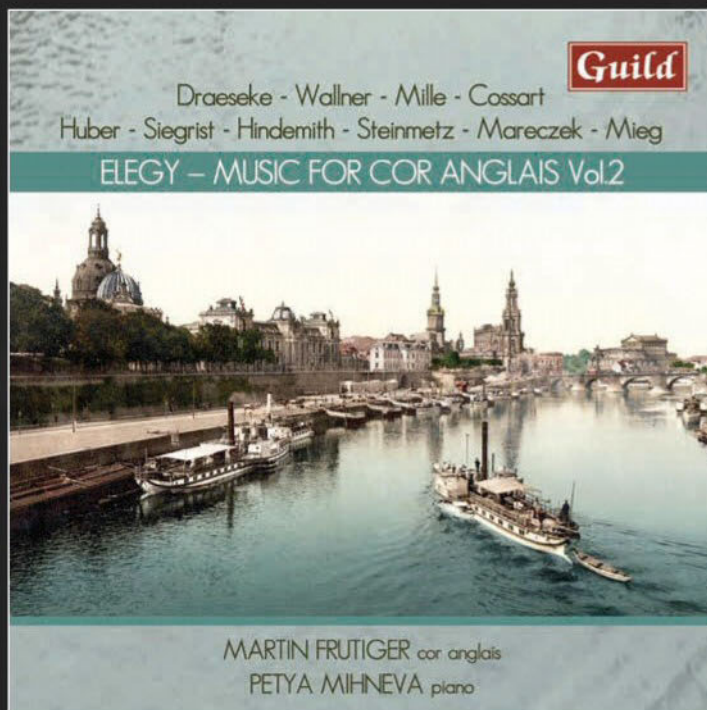


World premiere recordings of the major orchestral works of the prolific Caspar Diethelm, one of the finest Swiss composers of his generation.

GM3CD 7808



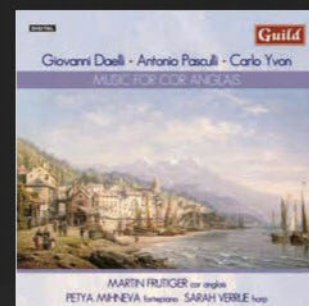
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Petya Mihneva, piano

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S Harrison

Return of the Nightingales^a. Par-feshani-ye 'eshq: Six Pieces after Bidel^b. Lunae: Four Nocturnes^c. Shadows: Six Portraits of William Baines^c. Four Jazz Portraits^d. The Souls of Flowers^d. Northern Lights^d. Luna ... for Nicola^d

^aPhilippa Harrison, ^bDuncan Honeybourne, ^cIan Pace, ^dRenée Reznik *pf*
Prima Facie © PFC072 (69' • DDD)



The piano music on this disc all comes from the past five years, following on a comparable period when Sadie Harrison (*b*1965) chose to put compositional activities on hold to work as an archaeologist; an activity no doubt galvanised through her involvement with the culture, its riches so nearly obliterated during the Taliban era, of Afghanistan. This is manifest in the alternately ecstatic and ominous expression to be found in *Return of the Nightingales*, a field recording of which bird provides the backdrop for some intricate and fastidious writing that alludes to Messiaen and Scriabin across its eventful and increasingly intoxicating course.

Couplets from the 18th-century Sufi poet Bidel lie behind the evocative vignettes of *Par-feshani-ye 'eshq* ('The fluttering wings of love'), though Harrison casts her net considerably wider for inspiration. Thus, the subtle contrast in her takes on the archetypal nocturne that is *Lunae* or the pert homages to jazz pianists of *Four Jazz Portraits*. Above all, *Shadows* – six pieces which amount to a biography-in-music of the short-lived while prolific composer William Baines – draws on aspects of his music with salient references from his diary to result in a sequence which renders the protagonist from an affecting and frequently almost tangible perspective.

Three limpidly appealing miniatures conclude a disc that offers much of interest for inquiring listeners and players alike. Not that those latter will find it easy to match the technical finesse and interpretative insight of the pianists featured here, their playing enhanced by the realistic sound courtesy of Prima Facie. Harrison has built up a sizeable discography (find out more at sadieharrisoncomposer.co.uk), to which this latest release is a welcome addition. **Richard Whitehouse**

Paganini

24 Caprices for Solo Violin, Op 1

Augustin Hadelich *vn*

Warner Classics © 9029 57282-2 (81' • DDD)



It's fascinating to compare Augustin Hadelich's account of the 24 Caprices

with the version by Suye Park that I reviewed in the January issue. Hadelich is far more prone to push for maximum dynamic contrasts, in the Fourth Caprice for example, with its multiple-stops in thirds, where even within the first minute key linking phrases are projected with maximum emphasis whereas Park holds fast to an even line. In general, Hadelich plays these pieces not as studies but as tone poems, even rhapsodies. In reviewing Park's BIS disc I drew attention to No 13, 'the opening of [which] might have sounded more off-the-cuff'; well, here it does, Hadelich opting for a less legato approach, his attack at speed on the G string in No 19 fully the equal of Park, though in the mystical trilling of No 6 he captures more of the music's poetic heart: his diminuendo as the music changes key towards the end of the piece is absolutely breathtaking.

In No 17 in E flat, with its playful runs on the E and A strings, Hadelich sounds as if he's challenging his rivals to have as much fun as he is having: the only time I have heard this music sound a more mercurial note is in Liszt's piano transcription of it, and then only in the hands of Horowitz. In No 18, with its high-position challenges on the G string, both Park and Hadelich opt for an 'echo' approach to what after all sounds like a variety of hunting call, though their manner of doing so points to their differences. Park labours the point more obviously, whereas Hadelich sounds leaner and more clean-cut, less choppy in the rapid central section in thirds.

Then there's the kingpin of the set, the much-varied 24th Caprice, both performances full of character though Hadelich's approach is perhaps marginally more streamlined. Given a choice, his expressive way with slides and vibrato (which is never used with predictable consistency), his rich multiple-stops and often thrilling passagework at speed tends to incline me in his direction, though if you've already invested in Park's excellent CD, don't

swap until you've heard Hadelich first. Neither should you forget Perlman (Warner, 6/72), Zehetmair (ECM, 12/09), Shlomo Mintz (DG, 11/82) or of course the wonderful Michael Rabin (Warner, 9/93). If you can sample them all then try to do so but if you want to experience this music as music first and foremost, then Hadelich is a pretty good bet. As with Park's CD, the sound is superb. **Rob Cowan**

Selected comparison:

Park (1/18) (BIS) BIS2282

Schubert · Szymanowski

Schubert Piano Sonatas - No 13, D664; No 14, D784 Szymanowski Piano Sonata No 2, Op 21

Lucas Debargue *pf*

Sony Classical © 88985 46563-2 (68' • DDD)



The swirl of publicity that surrounded Lucas Debargue as the fourth-

place winner of the 2015 Tchaikovsky Competition brought tremendous pressure to bear. By the time Sony released Debargue's debut recording the next year, the stakes were very high indeed. Listening to it, I'll admit I was among the sceptical and also somewhat concerned at the direction the career of this gifted young pianist might take. Hearing his latest release, my reservations have diminished somewhat. There is nothing of the quirky readings for novelty's sake, very little of spotlighting details at the expense of the whole and, overall, a more secure stylistic grasp seems evident. Meanwhile, Debargue's wholehearted commitment to the music he plays has never been in question.

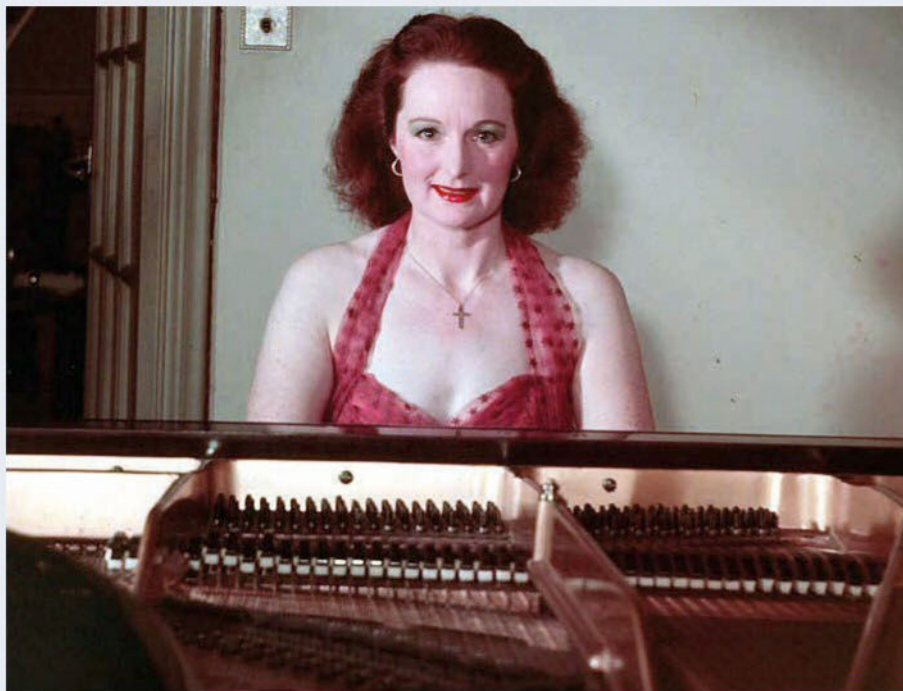
If there is little in Debargue's approach to either of the two Schubert sonatas that is recognisably Viennese, they provide the occasion for some effective music-making. The A major Sonata is calm, beguiling and full of charm. Beautifully voiced chords contribute to the lyrical slow movement's sense of serenity, while the concluding rondo overflows with joy.

There is also much to admire in the implacably tragic A minor Sonata. Debargue's deft evocation of the flight from the Furies in the finale is the highlight of the disc. The *Andante* too is successful, achieving a sort of elevated rapture. However, problems lurk in the first movement, marked *Allegro giusto*, or a 'strict *allegro*'. Generally speaking,

GRAMOPHONE *Focus*

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Eileen Joyce *pf*

Decca Eloquence mono © 10 11 ELQ482 6291 (12h 42' • ADD)

Recorded 1933-59. ^aFrom APR APR7502 (12/11)



Pianophiles will be slaver at the prospect of having access to all this great artist's recordings. Some might not slaver quite as much, however, when they realise that six of the 10 CDs in the box are exactly the same (titles, running orders and transfers) as the five discs issued by APR in 2011 as 'Eileen Joyce: The Complete Parlophone & Columbia Solo Recordings 1933-45'. The same, that is, except for the concerto and chamber items which were not included, to whit Mozart's A major Rondo, Turina's



Rapsodia sinfónica, Arensky's Piano Trio, Haydn's Piano Trio in G and piano concertos by Ireland and Shostakovich. Sorry, but there's nothing for it but to shell out again, for all six are, if not benchmarks, absolutely unmissable together with many additional treasures, immaculate annotations and excellent 55-page English-only booklet with essays by Bryce Morrison, David Tunley, Victoria Rogers and series producer Cyrus Meher-Homji: 121 works altogether, with only a handful of duplications.

Before addressing these six collaborations, I return briefly to the 87 solo titles common to APR and Decca. When I reviewed the APR CDs in the December 2011 issue, I wrote that '... listening to Joyce is strangely addictive. One cannot wait, as it were, to read the next chapter. She shares with Kreisler and Tauber the same unteachable ability to elevate the second-rate to the first-rate, and to illuminate familiar masterpieces with a convincing and unmistakable voice.'

At the risk of repeating myself further, among the many highlights

is the remarkable *La leggerezza* that first brought Joyce to the attention of the movers and shakers. For the 'B side' she offered Paul de Schlözer's (or is it really Moszkowski's?) infamous *Étude* in A flat, Op 1 No 2, accessible only to the Hamelins and Houghs of this world. What fabulous dexterity and tonal allure, what fearless execution and total musical conviction! In many of these short, showy works, Eileen Joyce is nonpareil. Her celebrated 1934 dispatch of Palmgren's *En route* will put an end to any argument about that. Only in the eight Brahms titles does she seem anything less than completely convincing.

As to the (previously omitted) chamber and orchestral recordings, in the earliest of these, Mozart's Rondo in A major recorded in 1936, we get a glimpse of the pellucid tone and unaffected phrasing that won her playing of this composer the unlikely admiration of Glenn Gould (three of the sonatas are included in the collection). The Ireland Concerto remains a classic. This was its premiere recording, as was the no less successful account of Shostakovich's First Piano Concerto recorded by the same forces less than three months earlier. But for me it is the Arensky Trio that shows Joyce at her brilliant best. In the company of Henri Temianka and Antoni Sala, she finds a perfect balance of stunning virtuosity, nimble wit and, in the lovely third movement, a deeply affecting lyrical repose that gives the lie to those who say that Joyce's playing was all surface glitter. I'd buy the set for this performance alone, with the Haydn *Gypsy* Trio as an accompanying *amuse bouche*.

No less desirable are the Decca (1946-47) and HMV (1956) recordings. Eloquence ascribes the Decca solos to disc 7, though almost all were made in 1947, a year after the concertos found on disc 8. These include Beethoven's *Pathétique*, Schumann's *Papillons* and a previously unpublished Chopin E minor Waltz. The earliest work with orchestra is Bliss's *Baraza* for the film *Men of Two Worlds*, which Joyce recorded with the National Symphony Orchestra under Muir Mathieson – the same forces with which she had, earlier, recorded excerpts from Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto for the film *Brief Encounter*. The LPO under Erich Leinsdorf were her partners for the commercial recording of the full work, a compelling, engrossing reading for which I have had a lifelong fondness while secretly wishing

it had been Mathieson and the NSO who had partnered her. Neither you nor I will have heard the Tchaikovsky Second Piano Concerto recording which precedes this on disc 8 since it has remained unpublished until now. After an unusually solemn exposition from Fitelberg (this was one of a series of recordings he made for Decca after the Second World War), Joyce seizes the heady bravura of her role with thrilling vitality and precision. This, you feel, is going to be an extraordinary reading. Sadly, it becomes *hors de combat* all too soon, not just because of the Siloti cuts in the slow movement but for several passages excised from the first movement and the unaccountable omission from the otherwise complete last movement of its final bar.

Disc 9 opens with Joyce's celebrated account of the Mendelssohn G minor Concerto under Fistoulari, music that suits her particular gifts to perfection. Lightly pedalled, the outer movements are like sparkling champagne, yet has there ever been a more touching account of the slow movement? This last appeared on a 1998 Dutton CD with the Rachmaninov, Franck Symphonic Variations and Turina Rhapsody (7/98). What you won't find anywhere else are Eileen Joyce's four recordings playing the harpsichord. For Bach's exuberant Concerto for three harpsichords, BWV1064, two less substantial Vivaldi arrangements and George Malcolm's whimsical *Mozart* Variations, her partners are Malcolm himself, Thurston Dart and Denis Vaughan.

The last three tracks of disc 9 and all of disc 10 are devoted to Joyce's recordings for Saga, an unevenly performed ragbag of 13 encores, including *Für Elise* and *Clair de lune* (dutiful), several remakes of Parlophone titles (superb) and a puzzlingly nondescript account of Grieg's Notturmo. Last of all comes the Grieg Concerto in a resonant acoustic with the Royal Danish Orchestra under John Frandsen. Few would make this their first choice; but if you ignore the occasional moments of slapdash ensemble and a boisterous, blustery view of the music (subtle it is not), there is no denying the drama and burning sense of purpose Joyce brings to the score, many hidden details of which emerge unexpectedly. The producer of these Saga recordings was the late William Barrington-Coupe. At least there was one Joyce in his life who was a genuinely great pianist. **G**

Debargue finds it almost impossible to resist the temptation to slow down before lyrical passages, but in this instance it is particularly deleterious. In the recapitulation, when the plaintive second subject is ominously interrupted by stark octaves, triplet minims followed by the minim down-beat of the next bar (8'42", 8'50", 8'59", etc), Debargue steps out of character, delivering the octaves as equally accented monoliths. It's a rhythmic gesture that could conceivably evoke the blows of a demolition hammer or reports of an automatic weapon but it does not exist in 19th-century music, and certainly has no place in Schubert.

Szymanowski's Second Sonata, nearly half an hour of relentlessly thick chordal textures, presents a sea of challenges to its interpreters. When they're met successfully, as we know they can be from performances by Richter and Marc-André Hamelin, the result is powerful. On the other hand, in Debargue's hell-for-leather reading, entire pages go by in an unintelligible wash of virtually undifferentiated sound. Rarely does a major label afford us the opportunity of observing, up close and personal, the gradual maturation of an artist in such minute detail. **Patrick Rucker**

Julian Jacobson and Mariko Brown

Busoni Fantasia contrappuntistica^a Casella Pupazzetti^b Debussy Khamma^b Herschel Hill Nocturne^a Poulenc Sonate^b Satie Trois Morceaux en forme de poire^b Julian Jacobson, Mariko Brown^b p/f^a pfs
Somm © SOMMCD0178 (79' • DDD)



If this disc's contents appear slightly incongruous, try to imagine them in the context of a two-part concert with the Busoni *Fantasia contrappuntistica* alone in the first half, followed by a second half given over to Satie, Debussy, Casella, Herschel Hill and Poulenc. Although Busoni felt that deploying his solo piano magnum opus for 20 rather than 10 fingers might yield easier, more transparent results for pianists and listeners alike, he did not hesitate to revise, rewrite and thicken the score. In the wrong hands, this arrangement can sound overblown and turgid.

However, Julian Jacobson and Mariko Brown shape the ingenuous yet often convoluted score with impressive ensemble precision, textural leanness

and polyphonic clarity. Their conception is closer to the Schiff/Serkin and Schiller/Humphreys recordings than the relatively heavier Banowetz/Stevenson and Revenaugh/Leighton Smith readings. Indeed, Jacobson/Brown surpass their colleagues in certain respects: their fleeter, more incisive articulation of the *marcatissimo* writing in the *Allegro* section (2'37"), the superbly synchronised scales and trills, and their supple dispatch of the *sotto voce* bitonal arpeggios (5'47"). My only half-quibble concerns the fourth fugue (23'26"), where the *leggero* bass octaves are not ideally light and bristling.

Dating from 1910-12, Debussy's ballet *Khamma* anticipates the more epigrammatic and harmonically adventurous elements of his later *Études* and the *En blanc et noir* suite. Since Debussy's piano reduction (he never completed the orchestral score) abounds with notes beyond the scope of a single player, four hands make lighter work, so to speak. That said, I miss the sensuous tempo fluctuations and colourful nuances that Jean-Efflam Bavouzet brought to his own solo piano arrangement (Chandos, 11/09).

The pianists' straightforward, almost deadpan approach to Satie's droll phraseology extends to Casella's more genuinely humorous miniatures encompassing the four-hand suite *Pupazzetti* (an earlier, more elaborate version of the opening March is available as a download). The clotted harmonies of late Herschel Hill's elegiac Nocturne tend to cancel themselves out, going in one ear and out the other – not unlike sections of the Busoni! Lastly, the duo play Poulenc's tart and succinct four-hand Sonata well, although the opening Prélude could be more driving and sharper-edged in the manner of Tacchino/Stephan and Rogé/Collard. Somm's recorded sound evokes palpable concert-hall realism, and Michael Quinn's annotations are both informative and entertaining. **Jed Distler**

Busoni – selected comparisons:

Banowetz, Stevenson (12/96) (ALTA) AIR-CD9044

Schiff, Serkin (7/99) (ECM) 465 062-2

Schiller, Humphreys (4/06) (NAXO) 8 557443

Revenaugh, Leighton Smith (EMI) 397469-2

Poulenc – selected comparisons:

Rogé, Collard (10/95⁸) (DECC) 475 7097DC5

Tacchino, Stephan (ERAT) 9029 58064-3

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John Luther Adams

The US composer's music poses challenges in recording, such is the intrinsic connection between it and nature, writes **Paul Kilbey**

John Luther Adams's *Become Ocean* (2013) rises and falls, waxes and wanes, roars and whispers. Yet it is also unchanging – a single musical texture lasting 42 minutes, never interrupted, never switching course. The performance marking at the top of the score simply says *Inexorable*. Harps ripple in soft arpeggios; drums and cymbals roll with sustained menace; brass blares like a light on the horizon. It is hypnotically evocative. The orchestra takes on an oceanic vastness, and it engulfs us as we listen.

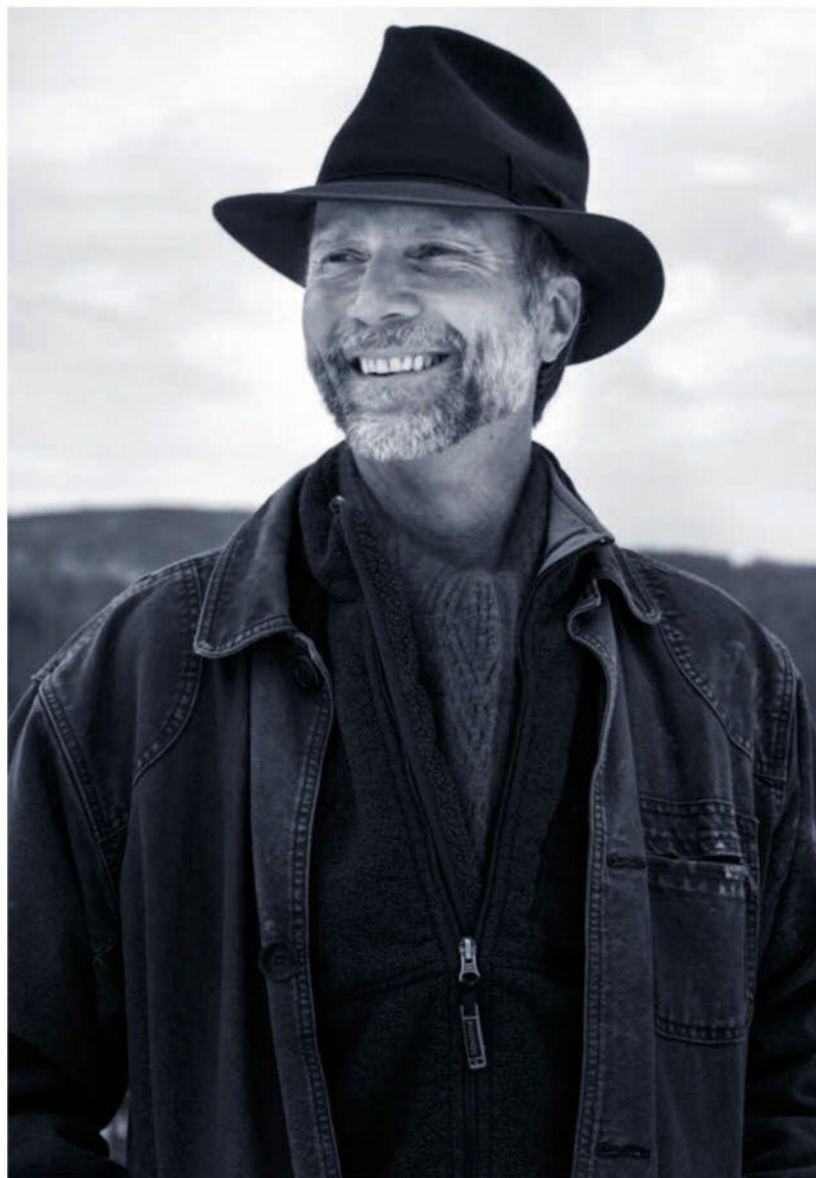
Adams took the title for this work (which won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 2014 and a Grammy in 2015) from a poem by John Cage for Lou Harrison, Adams's mentor. 'Listening to it we become ocean,' Cage wrote of Harrison's music. But for Adams, the ocean metaphor is deeper than this. 'Life on this earth first emerged from the sea,' he says in his programme note. 'And as the polar ice melts and sea level rises, we humans find ourselves facing the prospect that once again we may quite literally become ocean.'

'I no longer want to be outside the music, listening to it as an object apart. I want to inhabit it'

At its midpoint, *Become Ocean* reaches the crest of the second, and largest, of three huge, crashing waves, rising momentarily to *fff*. And then something unusual happens – if you listen carefully. The music doubles back on itself: rising patterns start to fall, crescendos fade away. The whole piece is a palindrome. But, from bar to bar, this is barely audible. The ocean surges on regardless.

Become Ocean is full of strange contradictions: a palindrome that seems to keep moving forwards; a depiction of the wild ocean, but written with almost mechanistic precision. And it both celebrates the ocean's awesome power and, in its relentlessness, strikes a note of fear. 'It may be the loveliest apocalypse in musical history,' wrote Alex Ross after the Seattle Symphony premiere. Of course, there is also a paradox at the heart of mankind's relationship with nature: we may love and depend on it, but so much of what we do is gradually destroying it. And nature has always had, and will always have, the capacity to destroy us.

To live in remote Alaska, as Adams did for decades, means having the vastness of nature everywhere. Many of his works are involved with the Alaskan landscape – mountains, glaciers, forest, tundra. Though born in Mississippi in 1953, Adams came to Alaska in the 1970s and found a spiritual home there. 'Through sustained listening to the unique resonances of



John Luther Adams draws inspiration from the Alaskan landscape

this place I've aspired to make music that belongs here,' he has written, 'music that somehow resonates with all this space and silence, cold and stone, wind, fire and ice.'

What Adams calls 'resonance of place' is an abiding compositional concern. The 75-minute *In the White Silence* (1998) for vibraphones, harp, celesta and strings creates 'an enveloping musical presence equivalent to that of a vast tundra landscape'. Like several of Adams's works, it uses only white notes – no sharps or flats. The instrumental parts interlock in similar but shifting patterns, like the subtly uneven expanse of the Alaskan wilderness. On one level this is an almost impressionistic evocation of the place – but Adams is doing more than setting a scene. He is creating something that works in the same way as the landscape that inspired it, and invites its listeners to contemplate it as one might a stark Alaskan vista. 'I no longer want to be outside the music, listening to it as an object apart,' he wrote of this work. 'I want to *inhabit* the music.'

Inuksuit (2009) is a composition to be inhabited in a quite different way. Working from a 'folio' rather than a score, between 9 and 99 percussionists realise it afresh each time. Players are stationed around a wide area, ideally outdoors,

ADAMS FACTS

Birth He was born in Meridian, Mississippi, on January 23, 1953

A passion for percussion

Adams was a rock drummer in his teens, as well as a pianist and a trumpeter. In later years he worked as a timpanist.

To Cage via Zappa An interest in Frank Zappa sparked his exploration of experimental music, with Zappa's enthusiasm for Varèse leading him towards composers such as Feldman and Cage.

West Coast education His formal studies took place at the California Institute of the Arts, where he studied with Leonard Stein and James Tenney.

A writer of note Eloquent with words as well as music, Adams has published several engrossing books about his work, including *Winter Music: Composing the North* (Wesleyan University Press: 2004).

and are free – like the listeners – to move around. The surroundings and the performers therefore create a unique musical world each time, and each listener's experience is bound to be just as unique. Despite the work's variable form, a sensitive CD (and DVD) recording beautifully captures *Inuksuit*'s arc: from the gentle sound of birdsong,

through a central section of terrifying intensity, back to an eerie place of calm, punctuated now by piccolos and other bright but artificial sounds. If it's the indifference of nature that comes through so hauntingly in *Become Ocean*, in *Inuksuit* mankind's own place within nature is interrogated: both how we choose to experience nature and what we choose to do to it.

'Everything leads me back to nature,' Adams has written. 'Nature is geography and geology. Nature is biology and ecology. Nature is physics. More specifically for a composer, nature is acoustics – the physics of sound.' This is an important aspect of Adams's work: the connection between music and nature is intrinsic. On some level, music is a natural phenomenon, with the same inherent beauty as a mountain range or a forest. *The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies* (2002), for solo percussionist and 'aura' of electronics, is inspired by the 'voices' Adams heard from within the tam-tam sounds of another of his percussion works, *Strange and Sacred Noise* (1991-97). In the later piece, the inner resonances of percussion instruments are drawn out in the electronic 'aura', becoming an other-worldly template for the live percussionist. Something similar happens in *Ilimaq* (2012), recorded in 2015

in a version for solo percussionist with electronics creating a four-part canon of the soloist's line.

Other Adams works approach nature from different angles. *Songbirdsongs* (1974-80) is a 'translation' – not a transcription – of birdsong for piccolos and percussion. *Canticles of the Holy Wind* (2013) also 'translates' birdsong, but in a different way, and to completely different effect: it is scored for quadruple chorus, stationed around the audience, and four roaming vocal soloists. *Clouds of Forgetting*, *Clouds of Unknowing* (1991-95) for chamber orchestra is an abstract exploration of progressively wider musical intervals, from minor seconds to major sevenths. But another form of abstraction – the 'floating fields of colour' of the painter Mark Rothko – is Adams's concern in his beautiful chamber composition *The Immeasurable Space of Tones* (1998-2001), an exploration into the colourific properties of harmony.

If there is a typical Adams composition, it is a work of his that can't be properly represented in recording. *The Place Where You Go to Listen* (2004-06) is a sound and light installation that effectively composes itself, continually, in the University of Alaska Museum of the North, Fairbanks, Alaska. Though unfortunately out of action at the moment, it translates seismological, meteorological and geomagnetic data from Alaskan locations into pure electronic sound: you really can listen to the ground moving beneath you and the skies flickering above. It is the essence of nature, given musical form. And Adams as composer is both everywhere and nowhere, as befits a true experimentalist: he has shaped the complexion of the sound, but nature has brought it to life.

How will such sound change in the years to come? At the edge of the Arctic, Alaska is especially vulnerable to climate change. Adams's work, always rooted in nature, inevitably invites such contemplation. A 'sequel' to *Become Ocean – Become Desert* – will be performed by the Seattle Symphony and Ludovic Morlot in March 2018. It is awaited eagerly – and with trepidation. **G**

EXPERIENCE ADAMS ON DISC

Nature-inspired orchestral, choral and chamber works

**Become Ocean**

Seattle Symphony / Ludovic Morlot

Cantaloupe (11/14)

Adams's most famous work to date is performed vividly by its Seattle commissioners. It was preceded by a smaller orchestral work, *Become River*, and its sequel, *Become Desert*, will be performed in March.

**Canticles of the Holy Wind**

The Crossing / Donald Nally, Amy Garapic *perc*

Cantaloupe

'An hour of wind and of sky and of birds' (as conductor Donald Nally puts it), this luscious choral work translates birdsong into a strange and compelling new form, with the four choirs singing 'transliterations of the voices of the wind and birds'.

**In the White Silence**

Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble / Tim Weiss

New World Records

The vast expanses of the Alaskan tundra inspire this beautiful concert-length chamber work. It is given a haunting and graceful performance by the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble.

Vocal



Edward Breen enjoys Obrecht from The Brabant Ensemble:

'Thick, rich textures weaving like garlands around the sustained cantus firmus suit this ensemble well' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**



Hugo Shirley embraces an album of seductive songs from Juliane Banse:

'All are lovingly wrapped in orchestral garb, which is a particularly attractive proposition with the Pfitzner songs' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 76**

CPE Bach • JC Bach • JS Bach

CPE Bach Magnificat, Wq215 H772 **JC Bach** Magnificat, E22 **JS Bach** Magnificat, BWV243

Joëlle Harvey *sop* Olivia Vermeulen *mez*

Iestyn Davies *countertenor* Thomas Walker *ten*

Thomas Bauer *bar* Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen

Hyperion © CDA68157 (77) • DDD • T/U



Three *Magnificats*, by the three most famous members of the Bach family, make for a

delectable triptych from a 40-year span, with each strikingly promoting their distinctive musical priorities. If Johann Sebastian's first Leipzig Christmas in 1723 impelled him to display all his high-Baroque wares in a canticle of mesmerising variety, then both his cosmopolitan sons accept the subsequent challenge with alacrity in their colourful settings – with the more substantial CPE score now beginning to enter the canon.

For their father's perennial masterpiece, Jonathan Cohen and Arcangelo snap into their festive sparklers with grand authority and lithe ebullience, sweeping effortlessly from verse to verse with considerable purpose. There's something attractively straightforward about 'Quia fecit' with the characterful Thomas Bauer agreeably supported by Cohen's present harpsichord, not least because it has a delicious effect on the languid curves of Iestyn Davies's and Thomas Walker's 'Et misericordia', which follows. One is struck throughout by the exceptional balance of the voices and instruments yet without forgoing Cohen's animated and imaginative way with text. Indeed, when one reaches the 'Gloria Patri' at the close, the music seems to have evolved imperceptibly in a generous seam of exquisitely judged verses.

Arcangelo's voyage into the sons' *Magnificats* is no less well paced or astutely textured. As we move into Johann Christian's third setting (thought to be for Milan Cathedral in 1760), the new idiom

becomes decidedly operatic, riven with self-conscious conceits and reeking of *galant* suavity. But it goes down very nicely in around 10 minutes, especially the expectant choral interpolations in 'Fecit potentiam' and even the slightly perfunctory doffing of the cap to dad with a decent enough fugue to end.

Carl Philipp Emanuel's *Magnificat* is a substantial homage to his father's setting (there are some obvious quotes), especially in the successful combining of so many contrasting elements. If CPE is rather less succinct than Johann Sebastian, there's no denying that there are some brilliant and affecting set pieces, especially when carried by Joëlle Harvey's uniformly dramatic and engaging singing – not to mention the supreme final double fugue when the choir and orchestra all but take off. It's 40 years since King's College Choir Cambridge under Philip Ledger recorded the work in what seemed a rather muddy and elusive idiom. Not here, where Cohen and Arcangelo bring us an illuminated Bachian constellation of three canticles colliding in captivating relief.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

JS Bach • Handel

JS Bach Magnificat, BWV243

Handel Dixit Dominus, HWV232

Vox Luminis / Lionel Meunier

Alpha © ALPHA370 (61) • DDD • T/U



Despite Peter Wollny's concise essay promoting the pan-European context

of two supposedly polar contemporaries of similar geographical background – Handel and Bach – the two Baroque choral masterpieces here appear as especially strange bedfellows. Vox Luminis's reading of the *Magnificat* seems to revel in a studied pedestrianism sprinkled with eccentricity while the account of *Dixit Dominus* is brimful of vibrant imagery and committed theatre.

Of the disappointments in the Bach are an 'Et exultavit' delivered with an almost deliberate literalness and an 'Omnes generationes' at least twice as slow as any on record – removing any vestige of the energetic meaning of the verse. This occurs again in a puzzlingly supine 'Sicut locutus' where Bart Jacobs's organ continuo-playing, interspersed with *colla parte* doublings, reduces the movement to a quasi-rehearsal for navigating novice singers. There are some fine instrumental performances which temporarily relieve discomfort, but the skewed concept and unconvincing solo contributions fail to illuminate one of Bach's richest scores.

Turning the page to Handel and suddenly all those widely admired Vox Luminis protagonists, led by Lionel Meunier directing from his bass berth in the ensemble, find their collective purpose and verve. As in their best 17th-century projects, aspiring to a sophisticated exploration of rhetorical potential becomes the standard. From the remarkable concerto opening of 'Dixit Dominus', the visceral and the fragile appear beautifully balanced. There's an intimacy of expression in 'Tecum principium' (of a kind not even dimly realised in the Bach), and a chattering urgency in the 'Tu es sacerdos in aeternum' on those wonderful words, 'thou art a priest forever', as Handel kicks in with timeless roudades rooted finally in a searing pedal cadence.

There's also a finely moderated architecture here which entertainingly sees Meunier hotting up the 22-year-old's setting in all those places which Handel clearly thought were jolly good – the moments he revisited in the oratorios a generation later. For all the misfiring in the Bach, 'De torrente' – as unashamedly an erotic product of Handel's Roman experience as you'll find – is simply exquisite: tangy, ineffable and beautifully controlled. If ever there was a recording to download one work and jettison the other, this is it.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood



Animated and imaginative: Jonathan Cohen and Arcangelo bring a grand authority to Bach family Magnificats

JS Bach

Mass in B minor, BWV232

Christina Landshamer *sop* Elisabeth Kulman *contr*

Wolfram Lattke *ten* Luca Pisaroni *bass*

Dresden Chamber Choir;

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra /

Herbert Blomstedt

Accentus © DVD ACC20415; © ACC10415

(114 • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HS MA5.1, DD5.1 &

PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at St Thomas Church, Leipzig,

June 2017



Some B minor Mass recordings serve as a useful reminder of the prodigious demands made upon performers

by Bach's *opus summum*, if only in the ways that they fall short of meeting those demands. This is another such. With self-deprecating charm Blomstedt referred to the venture at the time as an indulgence: I'm reminded of Colin Davis taking on the *St Matthew Passion* in Gloucester Cathedral in 2001, but this mellifluous, shapely performance does not share the inimitably chiselled profile of that event.

Without getting caught up in the hustle and bustle of Chailly's Bach in Leipzig, Blomstedt lays a light, smooth plaster over the stylistic distinctions between each movement of the *Missa* proper: what should be the free-flowing, contemporary Italianate imitation of the 'Christe', for instance, and the planed *stile antico* of the second 'Kyrie'. There is a reluctance to play out with the kind of full instrumental weight that lent gravitas to Blomstedt's approach – same orchestra, same place, filmed in the organ loft of the Thomaskirche – in 2001 (EuroArts, reissued on Blu-ray). Bracingly vibrato-lite violins in the 'Credo' are a sign of historically informed practice, but period style isn't like an outfit to be hired for a costume ball. You can't fake it. The Gewandhaus horn player uses a valved instrument in the 'Quoniam' while phrasing in imitation of his natural-horn colleagues, with an unwieldy effort mirrored by Luca Pisaroni.

Just as she did for Peter Dijkstra (BR-Klassik, 4/17), Christine Landshamer brings smiling grace to the 'Domine Deus' and dovetails nicely with Wolfram Lattke, but the phrases are neatly chopped into bouncy four-bar segments and once you hear the regular stress on

the first beat of every bar it can be hard to ignore. Best of the soloists is Elisabeth Kulman, whose refined breadth of line and lightly worn dignity raises her contributions to another level. When Landshamer joins her for 'Et in unum Dominum' the performance begins to take on the persuasive force of the 2001 film, which Blomstedt then sustains throughout the choral triptych at the heart of the Mass. With an *Agnus Dei* of simple, unforced beauty, Kulman sets the seal on an account of solid virtues but intermittent insights. **Peter Quantrill**

Selected comparison:

Blomstedt (EURO) DVD 205 4518; 205 9234

JS Bach

'Small Gifts'

Cantata No 170, Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust. Cantatas: No 81 – Jesus schläft, was soll ich hoffen; No 119 – Die Obrigkeit ist Gottes Gabe; No 147 – Jesus bleibet meine Freude; No 182 – Sonata; Leget euch dem Heiland unter. Brandenburg Concertos – No 2, BWV1047; No 4, BWV1049. Concerto, BWV1056

Andreas Scholl *countertenor* Lorenzo Cavasanti *rec*

Alfredo Bernardini *ob* Wolfgang Gaisböck *tpt*

Ensemble 1700 / Dorothee Oberlinger *rec*

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88985 42839-2

(76' • DDD • T/t)



The gently punning title of this new recording from the countertenor Andreas

Scholl comes from a quotation by Bach. In the title-page dedication of his *Brandenburg Concertos* the composer describes the works as the result of '... the small talents that Heaven has given me for Music'. Gifts of both kinds are amply evident here, in a recording that cherry-picks its way through some of Bach's best bits to create a programme that will send you back to your CD collection to listen to the full works.

Joining forces with the recorder player Dorothee Oberlinger and her period group Ensemble 1700, Scholl revisits some familiar Bach through the lens of recorder obligatos. There are two complete *Brandenburg Concertos* (Nos 2 and 4), the cantata *Vergnügte ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* and the Harpsichord Concerto in F minor (repurposed here, not entirely successfully, for a wilfully bright soprano recorder) framed by sundry other bit and bobs including the 'Jesu, joy' chorale and the lovely title-aria from the cantata *Jesus schläft, was soll ich hoffen*.

Scholl's voice, with its bright directness and woody lower register, is a natural partner for Oberlinger's solo recorders, and the combination works particularly well in 'Leget euch dem Heiland unter' from *Himmelskönig, sei willkommen*, where he and Oberlinger find a lovely combination of grit and polish for this heartfelt musical prayer. There's an edgier, more complicated quality to Scholl's voice these days that lends itself better to minor-key arias with their human frailties and doubts. 'Wie jammern mich doch die verkehrten Herzen' from *Vernügte ruh* is beautifully shaped.

The two *Brandenburgs* are an earthy delight, their individual solo colours well balanced in the mix. Speeds are moderate and the emphasis is on warmth and energy rather than blinding virtuosity. That said, violinist Dmitry Sinkovsky's many solo contributions to the disc are real attention-grabbers – period string-playing of the very finest order. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Handel

Messiah, HWV56

(Foundling Hospital version, 1754)

Sandrine Piau, Katherine Watson *sops*

Anthea Pichanick *contr* Rupert Charlesworth *ten*

Andreas Wolf *bass-bar*

Le Concert Spirituel / Hervé Niquet

Alpha Ⓢ ② ALPHA362 (116' • DDD • T)



Handel's exact version of *Messiah* performed at the Foundling Hospital in May 1754 has been reconstructed for

memorable recordings by Hogwood (L'Oiseau-Lyre, 4/80) and McCreesh (DG Archiv, 12/97). Now it is the basis for Hervé Niquet's reinterpretation – although he makes a few interventions and does not allocate the soprano solos in strict accordance to the 1754 division of duties. At a running time of just under two hours, the quicksilver music-making causes much of the oratorio to skip by briskly without having sufficient rhetorical space and textural depth to guarantee a profound emotional impact – although there are plenty of things to enjoy along the way.

Rupert Charlesworth's unforced fluency fused with the lightly relaxed orchestra in 'Ev'ry valley' is top-notch. Sandrine Piau and the Le Concert Spirituel's strings integrate solemnity and furore together to striking effect when conveying the refiner's fire ('But who may abide'), with vocal embellishments that thrill while never forsaking sense and taste. Niquet's conducting of key moments such as 'For unto us a child is born' have quick momentum and yet are also relaxed and graceful. The trumpets are at an ideal distance in 'Glory to God', during which the overriding impression from the excellent choir is the importance of 'peace on earth'. Katherine Watson's nonchalant 'Rejoice greatly' is sung flawlessly, but the breathless pace of 'He shall feed his flock' (shared between Piau and Watson) lacks enough space to convey its consoling message. The opening stages of Part 2 are especially diminished by impatience: 'Behold the Lamb of God' lacks sufficient gravity for its solemn message, and a rushed 'He was despised' severely limits the scope for Anthea Pichanick to mine its sentimental treasures; the manic pace of 'He trusted in God' is aligned to eccentric whispered choral singing and feather-like strings. The choral singing in 'Lift up your heads' and 'Let all the angels of God' is softly compassionate, and the doleful unaccompanied passages in 'Since by man came death' are powerfully fulsome. Andreas Wolf's open-throated proclamation of 'The trumpet shall sound' is accompanied by broad bowed strings and Jean-François Madeuf's regal natural trumpet (Niquet performs only the first section, whereas Handel always performed it in full). There are a few moments of

mercurial whimsy, such as convoluted drone bass and pungent oboes punching throughout the Pifa, contrived harpsichord solo embellishments over the closing bars of 'Glory to God' and an absurd timpani solo prior to the oratorio's final cadences. Nevertheless, Niquet's high-wire interpretation is commendably inquisitive and often surprisingly intimate.

David Vickers

Handel

Ode for St Cecilia's Day, HWV76.

Concerto grosso, Op 6 No 4 HWV322

Cristina Grifone *sop* Hans Jörg Mammel *ten*

Musica Fiorita / Daniela Dolci

Pan Classics Ⓢ PC10382 (60' • DDD • T)



The eight verses of Dryden's 'Song for St Cecilia's Day' (1687) narrate the

power of music from the creation of the universe by the harmony of the spheres through to the last trumpet at the Day of Judgement. Handel's setting (1739) was an afterpiece to a revival of *Alexander's Feast* – another Dryden poem that also cleverly examines the power of music – that took place on St Cecilia's Day.

Musica Fiorita play the Overture with stately elegance, although the quick *Allegro*'s potential for conversational wittiness is overlooked and the entry of the lower strings that launches the charismatic fugue lacks pizzazz. The orchestra play the extraordinary accompanied recitative setting of Dryden's first verse spiritedly, and it is sung capably (if a bit drily) by Hans Jörg Mammel; I enjoyed his swaggering 'The trumpet's loud clangour excites us to arms' (featuring Jean-François Madeuf's impressive expertise on the natural trumpet, without the safety net of drilled holes to modernise intonation). Cristina Grifone's words are indistinct in 'What passion cannot music raise and quell' (the obbligato cello is disadvantageously waspish); the organ solo and strings in 'But oh! what art can teach' chug along methodically and do not beguile.

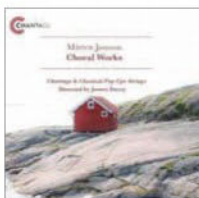
Fielding a modestly scaled choir of three voices per part, including the soloists, Daniela Dolci shapes the choruses assertively and her tempos are judicious; but recasting some orchestral passages for solo instruments does not improve on Handel's own intentions (the decision to use a solo violin in 'Sharp violins proclaim' is blatantly ungrammatical). Interesting ideas tend to be etched boldly at the expense of poetic charms. **David Vickers**



Warmth and energy: Dorothee Oberling and her Ensemble 1700 join countertenor Andreas Scholl in a cherry-picked Bach programme

Jansson

Far. Mörkblå tillit. Triptyk. The Choirmaster's Burial. Maria (IV). Missa popularis Chantage / James Davey
Chantage © CTG004 (50' • DDD • T)



A native of Uppsala, Mårten Jansson (b1965) composes almost wholly sacred

music (or 'sacral' as he terms it in his accompanying notes). This 50-minute-long crowd-funded release contains six of his works, including texts by his fellow Swedes Einar Askestad and Kerstin Dillmar as well as the *Missa popularis*, which fills the second half of the disc. James Davey directs the 40-strong London-based choir Chantage, BBC Radio 3 Choir of the Year in 2006. Although their balance and intonation are always spot-on, at full throttle the choir's tone can become a touch hard and unyielding.

However, the first few pieces on the disc are slow (and, on first acquaintance, perhaps a little dour). Thankfully the mood changes to something more

uplifting with the last movement of the *Triptyk* of 2017, an 'introspective journey ... leading from despair to hope'. Jansson states that he has 'always preferred beautiful music to atonal music' and this is certainly the case in the disc's centrepiece, a hauntingly effective setting of Hardy's *The Choirmaster's Burial*, inspired by a lecture given by Peter Pears in Sweden in 1981. This led 20 years later to this superb tribute to 'the tenor man', which allows Chantage to display the full glory of their four-octave range.

The concluding five-movement *Missa popularis* (2015) was originally composed for female voices and string quartet but is heard here in its more recent version with the addition of male voices and double bass. Inspired by different types of Swedish folk music and dance, it includes what must be the jolliest *Gloria* and *Sanctus* movements ever penned since Haydn. Olivia Clark soars radiantly above the choir in her soprano solo lines. The nine members of the Classical PopUps Strings provide svelte support in what deserves to be a big hit with choirs around the world.

Malcolm Riley

Martinů • J Novák

Martinů Bouquet of Flowers (Kytice)^a

J Novák Philharmonic Dances

^aKateřina Kněžíková *sop* ^aMichaela Kapustová

contr ^aJaroslav Březina *ten* ^aAdam Plachetka *bass*

^aPrague Philharmonic Choir & Children's Choir;
Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra /
Tomáš Netopil

Supraphon © SU4220-2 (66' • DDD • T/t)

^aRecorded live at the Rudolfinum, Prague,
December 17-19, 2016

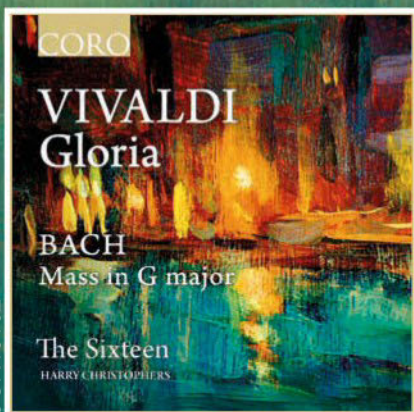


Martinů never heard a live performance of his folk cantata, or 'cycle of compositions to folk

texts', *Kytice* ('Bouquet of Flowers', 1937). Indeed, he seems not to have heard any performance until a few months before his death in 1959 when a copy of Karel Ančerl's 1955 recording, made after the first concert performance, reached Paul Sacher, with whom the composer and his wife were living in exile.

Kytice was written originally for Czech Radio for broadcasting, though it was always viable as a concert item. It consists of eight movements, arranged in pairs: a

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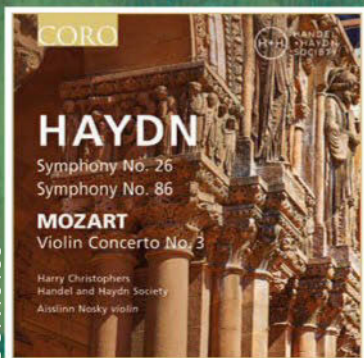


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breezy, brief Overture, two interludes and settings of five Moravian folk texts from František Sušil's collection. Together, they make a rather double-edged, light-and-shade sequence, the Overture's brightness offset by the cautionary tale of Uliana (who poisons her brother so she can run off with no fewer than four hussars!), the light pairing of 'Idyll' and 'The Little Girl Cowherds' followed by a martial Intrada and baleful 'His Kind Sweetheart' (the tale of a prisoner writing to his girl for succour after his family fail him). The final pairing of 'A Carol' and the 14-minute 'Man and Death' enormously expands the cantata's expressive frame of reference.

Although Ančerl's recording has been issued several times over the past 50 years, it is currently unavailable. Tomáš Netopil's new account is a more than satisfactory alternative, gentler and softer than the older version but with no loss of precision, not least in the folk-cum-Stravinskian rhythms. To cap it all, the first studio recording of Jan Novák's scintillating, Martinů-esque *Philharmonic Dances* (1955-56): why has it taken 61 years for this terrific tribute to the Czech Philharmonic to arrive in the studio? Buy and enjoy!

Guy Rickards

Fanny Mendelssohn

'Mendelssohn: Complete Songs, Vol 3 - Fanny Hensel, "The Other Mendelssohn"'
Sechs Lieder, Op 1 - No 2, Wanderlied; No 3, Warum sind denn die Rosen so blass?; No 5, Morgenständchen. Fünf Lieder, Op 10 - No 1, Nach Süden; No 2, Vorwurf; No 5, Bergeslust. Ach, die Augen sind es Wieder. Dämmerung senkte sich von oben. Der Eichwald brauset. Fichtenbaum und Palme. Die frühen Gräber, Op 9 No 4. Gegenwart. Gleich Merlin, dem eitlen Weisen. Harfners Lied. Ich kann wohl manchmal singen. Im Herbst. Kein Blick der Hoffnung. Die Mainacht. Das Meer erglänzte weit hinaus. Die Schiffende. Suleika. Traurige Wege. Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh. Wanderers Nachtlied

Susana Gaspar *sop* Kitty Whately *mez*

Gary Griffiths, Manuel Walser *bars*

Malcolm Martineau *pf*

Champs Hill © CHRC124 (60' • DDD • T/t)



The third volume of Malcolm Martineau's Mendelssohn survey turns away from Felix

to focus on songs by his sister, Fanny Hensel, 'the other Mendelssohn', whose work, long ignored or devalued because of her gender, is now mercifully undergoing a process of reappraisal. Though her Lieder,

like her brother's, can be uneven, the best of them reveal a strikingly original imagination, rooted in a considered, nuanced approach to her chosen texts. One could argue that she lacks Felix's wit. Yet she takes us into darker, altogether more troubling territory than he in terms of harmony and emotion. There is much here that deserves to be better known.

Seesawing shifts between major and minor keys probe ambiguities of feeling in 'Ich kann wohl manchmal singen' and 'Warum sind denn die Rosen so blass?' The latter, hinting at sexual betrayal, has a real sting in its tail. Bach informs both Hensel's vocal writing and her use of pianistic counterpoint in her setting of Goethe's 'Gegenwart', its loftiness thrown into sharp relief here by its juxtaposition with the Schiller song 'Der Eichwald brauset', with its *Sturm und Drang* turbulence. 'Im Herbst' opens with a sequence of truly startling dissonances, while 'Die frühen Gräber', a setting of Klopstock at his most despairing, is a remarkable confrontation with mortality, as a high vocal line meanders over immovable, penumbral chords, low in the piano.

Martineau's programme is carefully crafted to emphasise points of contrast not only between individual songs but also between four very different singers. There are two baritones, and throughout Manuel Walser's lyrical introversion offsets Gary Griffiths's darker sound and greater declamatory fire. Walser is at his best in a moodily elegant group of Heine songs near the disc's midpoint. Griffiths responds to the drama of 'Im Herbst' and the nobility of 'Gegenwart' with considerable intensity and power. Susana Gaspar's silvery soprano sounds exquisite in 'Die Mainacht' and unearthly in 'Die frühen Gräber', and she brings real passion to 'Der Eichwald brauset'. With only three songs, Kitty Whately has less to do than one would wish, though 'Warum sind denn die Rosen so blass?' is a high point, as is her impetuous 'Nach Süden' towards the disc's close. Martineau binds everything together, meanwhile, with playing of great dexterity and eloquence. Tim Ashley

Monteverdi

Selva morale e spirituali - Confitebor II; Crucifixus; Dixit Dominus II; Et iterum; Et resurrexit; Iste confessor I; Jubilet tota civitas; Laudate Dominum III; Laudate pueri Dominum I; Magnificat I; O ciechi, ciechi; Salve regina (two settings); Ut queant laxis; Voi ch'ascoltate

Balthasar Neumann Choir, Soloists

and Ensemble / Pablo Heras-Casado

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2355 (58' • DDD • T/t)



Compared to the 1610 *Vespers*, the operas or the madrigals,

Monteverdi's *Selva morale e spirituale* has been rather poorly served on disc. Perhaps it's the sheer scale of the project that includes some four hours of music; perhaps it's the range of repertoire that spans from solo-voice chamber music to double-choir festal extravagance. Whatever the reason, there's plenty of space for a new recording to supplement classic accounts by Les Arts Florissants and Cantus Cölln, and on the basis of this first selection from Pablo Heras-Casado and the Balthasar Neumann Choir and Ensemble I very much hope that this one-off release turns into a complete set.

Framing the disc are the mighty *Dixit Dominus secundo* and the *Magnificat primo* – two works calculated to show off the force of the Balthasar Neumann musicians in full spate. Skimming the hairpin bends of Monteverdi's shifting tempos, Heras-Casado delivers energised, highly rhythmic performances that always look and lean forwards to the next episode. He's helped by superb engineering, which allows the instrumental forces to glow bright above the voices, the cornetts carving firework-like trails against the rich choral backdrop.

Speeds are swift and dances light, lending real urgency to the joyful works. *Jubilet tota civitas* for solo soprano and the soprano duet *Ut queant laxis* positively groove with delight, while the *Et resurrexit* struggles endearingly to contain its excitement. But while everything is nuanced, correct and very glossy indeed, there's perhaps just a little too much uniformity, too much politeness to capture the true spirit of Monteverdi. Some rougher edges and a less controlled choral sound would give us those madrigalian colours that never sit far below the surface, even in the sacred music.

Alexandra Coghlan

Obrecht

Missa Gregorum. Agnus Dei (attrib). Cuius sacra viscera a 4. Mater Patris/Sancta Dei genitrix. O beate Basili. Salve regina a 6

The Brabant Ensemble / Stephen Rice

Hyperion © CDA68216 (74' • DDD • T/t)



Jacob Obrecht (1457/58-1505) is still not as well represented on disc as one might

hope, despite having (briefly) succeeded Josquin Desprez in Ferrara and having written over 30 cyclic Masses. This excellent premiere recording of *Missa Grecorum* is a very welcome addition to his discography and also includes the first recording of the motet *O beate Basili*.

The Brabant Ensemble open with Obrecht's most famous motet, the six-voice *Salve regina*, which listeners may know from the superb 1995 recording by the Oxford Camerata under Jeremy Summerly (Naxos). This new recording by Stephen Rice and The Brabant Ensemble is not dissimilar to Summerly's reading but offers a more sinewed vocal texture. In particular, Rice's slightly brisker tempos offer more buoyancy; and coupled with the agility of his ensemble and his harmonically scrumptious edition (just listen out for the juicy false relations on 'lacrimarum valle' – 'vale of tears'), it makes for a mouth-watering performance.

Missa Grecorum offers us Obrecht in his more common, dense polyphonic mode. Thick, rich textures weaving like garlands around the sustained cantus firmus suit this ensemble well and their bright, young voices make a delight of the glorious long sonorous notes of the 'Grecorum' melody in the opening passages of the *Gloria*. They also rise to Obrecht's surges of excitement, particularly at the repetitions of 'Jesu Christe' and the characteristic triple rhythm for 'Cum Sancto Spirito' right at end of the *Gloria*. As Obrecht hits his stride, so these singers really make the music flow.

Perhaps the biggest surprise of this disc, though, is the nimble and charming setting of *Mater Patris/Sancta Dei genitrix*. The tuning takes a moment to settle, but soon the motet unfolds ravishing chains of tumbling phrases on 'Aures tuae pietatis ad nos vertens a peccatis' ('Turning your merciful ears to us, release us from sin'). Obrecht's music and these performances are ravishingly beautiful and form a well-matched pair.

Edward Breen

Pickard

Binyon Songs^a. The Borders of Sleep^a.
The Phoenix^b

^aRoderick Williams *bar*

^bEve Daniell *sop* Simon Lepper *pf*

Toccata Classics (C) TOCCO413 (61' • DDD • T)



Vocal music does not feature prominently in John Pickard's catalogue. Alongside a

few minor choral works and the imposing hour-long cantata *Agamemnon's Tomb*, the present clutch is the sum total of his song production so far.

The five *Binyon Songs* (2010-12) that open the programme are his latest, not conceived originally as a cycle. The concluding 'The Burning of the Leaves' was written to commission in 2010 and the others added 'purely for [the composer's] own enjoyment' two years later. There is a fleeting flavour of Britten about the opening 'Nature' but otherwise Pickard's music develops in quite un-Brittenish directions. These songs are a model of word-setting in their clarity of focus, the music truly interpreting and providing context for Binyon's poems.

In *The Borders of Sleep* (2000-01), Pickard's context is a half-awake soldier at the Western Front, waiting to go over the top, dreaming of home. Again, his initial idea was for stand-alone songs, but the allusive nature of the poetry of Edward Thomas (1878-1917) – in which the Great War trenches are often not overtly depicted but evoked seemingly from afar – inspired the present more integrated cycle. These and the *Binyon Songs* are beautifully sung by Roderick Williams, who inhabits the tonal and expressive worlds of each number with tremendous conviction. *The Phoenix* (1992) is as much a 16-minute cantata for soprano and piano as a song, kaleidoscopic in expressive profile. Here, Pickard endeavoured 'to amplify in musical terms the ecstatic lyricism of the original [Anglo-Saxon] poem'. Eve Daniell provides a sensitive and well-formed account but sounds thin and strained in the stratospherically high passages. Simon Lepper accompanies both singers in exemplary fashion. Beautifully recorded, highly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Prokofiev

Cantata for the 20th Anniversary
of the October Revolution
Ernst Senff Choir, Berlin; members
of the Luftwaffenmusikcorps Erfurt;
Staatskapelle Weimar / Kirill Karabits
Audite (C) AUDITE97 754 (42' • DDD • T/t)



Following Prokofiev's decision to reinvent himself as a Soviet

composer, he wrote much that remains ideologically controversial. Less nakedly propagandist than *Zdravitsa* ('Hail to

Stalin'), a toast to the dictator on his 60th birthday, the earlier *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution* proved too radical for the commissars and was not given in Russia until 1965 (and then only in bowdlerised form). Kirill Kondrashin taped approved highlights for Melodiya (EMI, 8/70) but the rest could not be performed thanks to its inclusion of texts by the now anathematised Stalin. Finally, in 1992, Neeme Järvi set down the whole thing in London, presiding over an unorthodox line-up including accordion players, military band, marching feet and a cameo appearance by Gennady Rozhdestvensky with loudhailer, incarnating the voice of Lenin. At the live event from which the present recording derives, Kirill Karabits himself swivelled round to do the honours, baton in one hand, megaphone in the other. The only complete account with claims to timbral authenticity, Alexander Titov's from 1997 (St Petersburg Classics CGC006), has enjoyed more limited circulation, although the CD is available online.

Set against the familiar Chandos option, Karabits drives noticeably faster in those movements which include a text. While there are sound musical reasons for the attendant lightening of texture, there may also be a conscious attempt to downplay the ideological content. The results are undeniably exciting if less than seismic, the recorded sound wonderfully clear without threatening to overwhelm domestic speakers. No coupling either; but anyone who enjoys Karabits's lithe and lucid work with his other, British orchestra will relish this unexpected addition to his Bournemouth-made Prokofiev symphony cycle (Onyx).

Could this be the new *1812 Overture*? Or should we be wary when a score so directly represents a submission to and celebration of unpalatable politics? There's little evidence of irony in Prokofiev's *October* Cantata yet Karabits's musicians, many of them former East Germans, seem unfazed, plainly relishing Prokofiev's unlikely mix of 1920s agitprop, cinematic pattern music and long-breathed, 'socialist-realist' melody. A modicum of applause is retained and you may even want to join in. **David Gutman**

Selected comparison:

Philb Orch, N Järvi (3/93^R) (CHAN) CHAN10537

Rore • Morlaye

'Portrait of the Artists as a Starved Dog'

Morlaye Non son io che pai' in viso **Rore** Alcun non puo saper da chi sia amato. Beato mi direi. Come la notte ogni fiamella è viva. Convien ch'ovunque sua sempre cortese.



Anthea Pichanick is among the soloists to join Le Concert Spirituel and Hervé Niquet for a quicksilver account of Handel's *Messiah* – see review on page 66

Dissimulare etiam sperasti. Era il bel viso suo qual'esser suole. La giustizia immortale. L'inconstantia che seco han. L'ineffabil bontà del Redentore. Mentre, lumi maggior. Mia benigna fortuna. O morte eterno fin. Poi che m'invita Amore. Se ben il duol. Se come il biondo crin de la mia Filii **Verdelot** Queste non son più lagrime

Graindelavoix / Björn Schmelzer

Glossa Ⓢ GCDP32114 (75' • DDD • T/t)



Cipriano de Rore's discography is a pale reflection of his artistic and historical

significance. Graindelavoix's previous foray into the Italian (or Italianate) Renaissance focused on sacred music; here they turn for the first time to madrigals, specifically Rore's. Leaving aside the recital's programmatic premise (whose credibility depends as usual on one's sympathy with Björn Schmelzer's speculative proclivities) there is much to appreciate – not least the spotlight shone on one whose reputation as a madrigalist is second to none.

By the standards of some earlier recordings the asperities of Graindelavoix's tone production are attenuated; expressive

slides and ornaments reflect the inner torment that Schmelzer sees as the defining element of Rore's artistic personality. (His insights into the performance challenges it represents are worth reflecting on.) It seems to me that the ensemble is at its best *a cappella* or with plucked continuo (these two options accounting for the majority of selections). The more artificial the choices, the less they convince – as with the rendering of the canonic voices in the early Ariosto settings or the instrumental renderings of individual pieces preceding the vocal performance. As to the cornett-playing that punctuates the recital, it suffers in comparison with the fluency of the voices. There is greatest confidence in the pieces of (shall we say) standard madrigal length; in the lengthier setting of Virgil it is more difficult to maintain the same level of intensity throughout.

This last piece had me wondering what Concerto Italiano might do with Rore. It is instructive, for instance, that Graindelavoix appear not to emulate the text-fragmented rubato of Rinaldo Alessandrini, another director with a reputation for iconoclasm. One comes away feeling that, of the two, it is the Italian who is the more radical. **Fabrice Fitch**

Schnittke

Requiem³. Three Sacred Hymns

^aKatarzyna Oleś-Blacha, ^aMonika Korybalska,

^aAgnieszka Kuk *sops* ^aOlga Maroszek *contr*

^aDominik Sutowicz *ten* Choir of the Faculty of Music of the University of Rzeszów; ^aInstrumental Ensemble of the Artur Malawski Philharmonic in Rzeszów / Bożena Stasiowska-Chrobak Dux Ⓢ DUX1407 (46' • DDD)



There are some half a dozen recordings of Schnittke's Requiem in existence but it

can hardly be considered mainstream repertoire, or even particularly well-known. This new recording from the choral and instrumental forces of Rzeszów is therefore welcome, especially as it is of very high quality.

Like many of Schnittke's works, the Requiem is not entirely what it seems at first glance. It is a 'disguised' composition: it would hardly have been possible to compose and present a Requiem Mass in the Russia of the 1970s, so the work was written under the cover of being stage music for a production of Schiller's *Don Carlos* in Moscow in 1975. It is certainly

dramatic and colourful; the instrumentation includes electric guitar and an interesting range of percussion, particularly bells, which give an individual colour to the work, and the writing for vocal soloists and choir is obviously illustrative of the text in a way that the composer would eschew in his other choral works. The Choir Concerto and the *Penitential Verses* are slow burns, avoiding the direct kind of drama which is so immediately noticeable here.

The Rzeszów University choir obviously relish the challenge, really entering into the spirit of the work. You can hear both their enjoyment and their commitment throughout: compare, for example, the punched-out 'Rex tremendae majestatis' with the hushed 'Recordare' that follows. The soloists, in contrast with the choir's straight tones, are big voices, unafraid to use vibrato, though never to excess.

As a bonus, the choir give us the three tiny unaccompanied Sacred Choruses ('Bogoroditse Devo', the Jesus Prayer and the Our Father, all set in Slavonic). These are among Schnittke's most frequently performed choral pieces, in part because they are much the most approachable from a technical point of view. That does not make them any less interesting, however, and even so they are not without challenges, to which these singers rise with confidence. One might perhaps carp a little at the relatively short playing time – other recordings of the Requiem give us, for example, the Choir Concerto, the Piano Concerto and, in Tõnu Kaljuste's reading, Górecki's *Miserere* (Caprice) – but the programme is very satisfying as it stands.

Ivan Moody

Vasks

Da pacem, Domine. Mein Herr und mein Gott. Laudate Dominum^a. Prayer. The Fruit of Silence^a Ilze Reine *org* Latvian Radio Choir; Sinfonietta Riga / Sigvards Klava
Ondine © ODE1302-2 (68' • DDD • T/t)



Lauma Malnace's booklet note speaks of Pēteris Vasks's ability to 'transform

something deeply personal into a metaphysical message', which is surely one of the composer's greatest gifts and that which renders much technical discussion of his music irrelevant. 'One of' because Vasks has often done more too (he has railed on behalf of his fellow Latvians in gestures that seem more collective than personal), but here the mood is one of devotion almost without exception.

The piece titled *Prayer* (2011) is in fact the least prayer-like, rising up in agitation on behalf of 'the cold, the frightened, the oppressed' (the words of Mother Theresa) until it slips down via a cello/bass glissando on to a wondrous chord of rare comfort for Vasks. *The Fruit of Silence* (2013), the disc's postscript, also floats down on to a Fauré-like modulation in its final breath and there is a Brahms-like glow to *Mein Herr und mein Gott* (2016), which sets a poetic supplication by the politician-turned-hermit Nicholas of Flüe (1417-87).

In the two longest pieces, intensity comes from the act of prayer itself: focus, concentration, repetition. *Da pacem, Domine* (2016), 'a prayer for our mad world' in the composer's words, homes in on typical Vasks phrase shapes and harmonies but exercises remarkable control and generates extraordinary intensity. *Laudate Dominum* (2016) achieves something similar, pitting tumultuous organ passages against pure choral textures and again exploring the transformative power of repetition. Ilze Reine plays the organ of St John's Church in Riga as if with fire in her eyes, and the Latvian Radio Choir's trademark combination of purity and luminosity with a sprinkling of Russian friction sets the piece off. At first you might presume Vasks is growing more calm and reflective in these recent works. But the opposite might well be the case.

Andrew Mellor

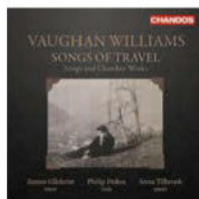
Vaughan Williams

Songs of Travel^a. Six Studies in English Folk Song^b. The Sky above the Roof^a. Orpheus with his Lute^a. Silent Noon^a. The Winter's Willow^a. Romance^b. Rhosymedre (arr Morrison)^c. Four Hymns^c

^aC James Gilchrist *ten* ^{bc}Philip Dukes *va*

Anna Tilbrook *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10969 (72' • DDD • T)



In his absorbing booklet essay, Stephen Connock draws attention to Vaughan

Williams's very special and deeply personal identification with the viola, justly mentioning in particular *Flos campi*, Suite for viola and small orchestra, and the slow movement from *A London Symphony*. (For my own part, I'd also cite the principal viola's devastatingly intimate 'alleluia' towards the end of the Fifth Symphony's Romanza slow movement.) Viola player Philip Dukes and pianist Anna Tilbrook make a lovely thing of the *Six Studies in English Folksong* (originally for cello and

piano, and given in May Mukle's 1927 transcription), and they generate a comparably stylish, keenly communicative rapport in the ravishing Romance found among the composer's papers after his death (most likely intended for the great Lionel Tertis). The delights continue as the tenor James Gilchrist joins his colleagues for urgently expressive renderings of both the wondrous *Four Hymns* (1912-14) that RVW inscribed to Steuart Wilson (a performance that all but matches the lofty eloquence of Ian Partridge's classic version with David Parkhouse and Christopher Wellington from the Music Group of London) and Richard Morrison's fetching 2016 arrangement of 'Rhosymedre' (the second of the *Three Preludes founded on Welsh Hymn-tunes* for organ).

Elsewhere, Gilchrist and Tilbrook draw upon the reserves of experience that come with two decades of performing together to lend delectably wise advocacy to the *Songs of Travel* (1901-04). These nine inspired settings of Robert Louis Stevenson never seem to pall and here really do come up as fresh as the day they were conceived; this splendid partnership's tenderly unaffected delivery of 'Whither must I wander?' stops me in my tracks every time – and did RVW ever write a sweeter melody? That just leaves a sequence of four songs composed between 1902 and 1908, with 'The Sky above the Roof' and 'Silent Noon' enjoying especially idiomatic treatment.

Chandos's Potton Hall sound is agreeably airy but just occasionally not ideally focused. Don't let that tiny niggle deter you, though; this is a strongly recommendable issue. **Andrew Achenbach**

Vaughan Williams

'Beyond my Dream - Music for Greek Plays' The Bacchae – Thou immaculate on high. Electra – Onward O labouring tread; O for the ships of Troy. Iphigenia in Tauris – excs Heather Lowe *mez* Joyful Company of Singers; Britten Sinfonia / Alan Tongue
Albion © ALBCD033 (63' • DDD • T)



Here's yet another hugely enterprising rescue-act from Albion Records, this time on

behalf of nearly 63 minutes' worth of incidental music that Vaughan Williams penned in 1911 for three plays by Euripides – namely *The Bacchae*, *Electra* and *Iphigenia in Tauris* – in Gilbert Murray's English-verse translation. Scored for mezzo-soprano (who both sings and recites), female



Delectably wise: viola-player Philip Dukes joins Anna Tilbrook and James Gilchrist in Vaughan Williams

voices and small orchestra, RVW's settings focus on the dramas' great choruses. Sadly, the promised staging of *Iphigenia in Tauris* fell through, though we do know of at least one public performance (on May 31, 1912) of all three musical scores. Murray himself was especially appreciative of how the composer's contribution to *Iphigenia in Tauris* 'sacrifices the rhythm of the music proper to the rhythm of the verse, so that the poetry and rhythm completely predominate, which is what the verse writer naturally likes'.

As has often been the case with so many of these comparatively early RVW discoveries, they make absolutely fascinating listening, not least for those countless fleeting premonitions of the towering masterpieces to come. Certainly, in the case of *The Bacchae* and *Electra*, I don't think it's too fanciful to detect tantalising glimpses of such questingly personal statements as *A Pastoral Symphony*, *Flos campi*, *Sancta civitas* and even the late symphonies (some of the gorgeously lyrical, oboe-led passages in *The Bacchae* momentarily put one in mind of the fourth-movement Intermezzo from the *Sinfonia antartica* and the heavenly Trio section from the Ninth's second movement).

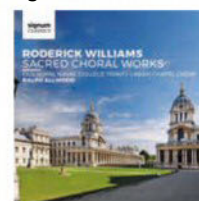
Admittedly, the sequence from *Iphigenia in Tauris* (which inhabits an altogether chaster, rather less exploratory harmonic world) may not always rise to quite the same level of inspiration, but that is not to decry the painstaking research and indefatigable musicological efforts of Alan Tongue, who put together the present performing editions from the composer's short score and parts housed in the British Library, and to whom an enormous debt of gratitude is most surely due. Indeed, these dedicated and scrupulously prepared performances featuring the mezzo-soprano Heather Lowe, Joyful Company of Singers and Britten Sinfonia under Tongue's watchful lead, Andrew Walton's top-notch production and Albion's copiously detailed presentation are all absolutely beyond reproach, and the disc as a whole must be deemed an essential acquisition for every true RVW aficionado.

Andrew Achenbach

R Williams

And a little child shall lead them. Ave verum corpus re-imagined. Children, go where I send thee. Christmas Bells. Holy Father, great creator. Hymne. Let nothing trouble you^a. The Lord's Prayer. Love bade me welcome. Mary had a

baby. O Adonai. O guiding night. O saviour of the world. Quare fremuerunt gentes?. This is the work of Christ. La Trinité qui ne change jamais
Old Royal Naval College Trinity Laban Chapel Choir / Ralph Allwood with Jonathan Eyre *pf^acond*
Signum © SIGCD517 (80' • DDD • T/t)



Roderick Williams OBE (b1965) is no stranger to these pages, being one of

this country's most distinguished baritones, equally at home on the operatic stage or concert platform, or in the recording studio. He modestly calls himself a 'singer who also composes', but this runs the risk of minimising the strong practical core to his attractive and beautifully written music, which deserves a much wider audience. Thankfully, Signum Classics has done him proud with a generously filled 16-track anthology which displays an astonishing stylistic versatility, varying from deliciously fresh arrangements of spirituals ('Children, go where I send thee' and 'Mary had a baby'), to the lyricism of the Metaphysicals (George Herbert's 'Love bade me welcome'), the ecstasy of Baudelaire

(a gorgeous setting of 'Hymne') and biblical texts, the gem being *And a little child shall lead them*. Little of this music will be familiar, save, perhaps, for the widely sung Advent antiphon *O Adonai*, with its crunchy bitonalism, and – at eight and half minutes – the most substantial piece on the disc.

Ralph Allwood obtains a vivid, rich blend from his 27 Greenwichian voices, eight of whom do splendid service as soloists, most notably Rebecca Leggett. Roderick Williams himself makes a cameo solo appearance in a vividly Handelian outburst, 'Why do the nations?', in his multi-layered setting of *Quare fremuerunt gentes?*, which also shows the influence of the fastest section from Britten's *Hymn to St Cecilia*. Technical challenges also abound in *Ave verum corpus re-imagined*, where Byrd's masterpiece is reconceived through a contemporary prism.

For three tracks Jonathan Eyre provides sparkling support at the piano, including *Christmas Bells* (a jazz-flavoured 'Bredon Hill' from *On Wenlock Edge*), in addition to conducting the opening piece. Williams's own notes are helpfully straightforward and the production is up to Signum's usual excellent standards. **Malcolm Riley**

'A due alti'

Bononcini Lasciami un sol momento. Per la morte di Ninfa. Sempre piango/Sempre rido ...

Caresana Lamento degli occhi ... **Handel** Caro autor di mia doglia, HWV182b **B Marcello** Felice chi vi mira. Lontan dall'idol mio **Steffani** Io mi parto

Filippo Mineccia, Raffaele Pé *countertens*

La Venexiana / Claudio Cavina

Glossa © GCD920942 (79' • DDD • T/t)



Countertenors Filippo Mineccia and Raffaele Pé form a vocally

impressive and well-matched duo for this selection of *duetti da camera* from the first half of the 18th century. Unlike operatic duets, where characters are usually in dialogue with each other or duelling from opposing perspectives, these chamber works frequently present musically equal partners, often performing the same text. As such they broadly follow the development of the solo chamber cantata with familiar recitative and aria structures, and highly nuanced texts.

If that all makes it sound a bit dry, then it will be a relief to know that the music is anything but. This disc opens

with Benedetto Marcello's joyful *Felice chi vi mira; ma più felice chi per voi sospira* ('Happy are those that can look at you; but happier are those who sigh for you ...') in which both countertenors bounce between happiness and sighing with evident delight. Their voices are brilliantly agile and suitably extrovert for this sort of cantata, and both singers excel in marrying the delicious onomatopoeic sighing qualities of the Italian text to Marcello's melodic shapes. Surprisingly, they are less secure in Handel's chamber duet *Caro autor di mia doglia*, a work that dates from his early Italian years but is here performed in a later reworking which equalised the register of the two voices. Handel's mobile bass line underpins two soaring, intertwining voices and his music throbs with heartbreak, but the singers fail to find either stillness or subtlety, instead opting for a relentlessly heroic approach to their upper registers in which the line 'dolce pena del core' ('sweet cause of my aching heart') feels particularly overblown.

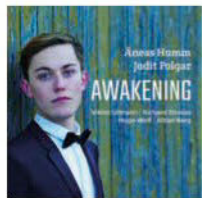
Elsewhere, though, there is much to delight. Listen especially for the glorious harp-playing of Chiara Granata's prelude to Cristofaro Caresana's *Lamento degli occhi* ... which also contains some of the best singing on this album. The countertenors are particularly engaging cast as one eyeball each. **Edward Breen**

'Awakening'

Berg Jugendlieder **R Strauss** Acht Gedichte aus 'Letzte Blätter', Op 10 - No 1, Zueignung; No 3, Die Nacht; No 4, Die Georgine. Wozu noch, Mädchen, Op 19 No 1. Traum durch die Dämmerung, Op 29 No 1 **Ullmann** Liederbuch des Hafis, Op 30 **Wolf** Lieder aus der Jugendzeit

Äneas Humm bar **Judit Polgar** pf

Rondeau Production © ROP6143 (55' • DDD • T/t)



The Swiss baritone Äneas Humm is only in his early twenties – and arguably looks even younger on the cover of his debut disc – but clearly lacks nothing for talent or confidence. Certainly, releasing an album of demanding Lieder as you head off to study at Juilliard (he began his training there, with Edith Wiens, in September) is a bold move.

There's a lot here that's impressive but unsurprisingly also a sense of artistic work in progress, of a natural and instinctive performer whose voice and interpretations are still in their early stages of development. The voice itself needs to

fill out, and currently sounds rather brittle and metallic, with the lower reaches underpowered and tremulous. There's a lack of colouristic variety, too, without the veiled, seductive shades that the Berg and Strauss songs call for.

The performances are perfectly fluent and well trained but perhaps a little cautious, with Judit Polgar's piano-playing coming up short on imagination and sparkle. Humm can't quite sustain the broad tempo presented for 'Die Nacht', and it's a shame that the pair choose such a low key for 'Zueignung', which, along with a rather plodding tempo, robs it of passion and excitement.

Humm nevertheless offers a highly persuasive 'Traurige Wege', the most substantial of the early Wolf songs here. But the pair are at their best in the four Hafis songs by Viktor Ullmann that conclude the selection. Here the young singer lets his hair down and offers real wit and flair in highly enjoyable and engaging performances.

Elsewhere on the disc he inevitably suffers from comparison with more seasoned singers. With time, though, he clearly has enormous potential to become a major artist in his own right. **Hugo Shirley**

'Bach and Before'

JS Bach Cantata No 75, Die Elenden sollen essen **Kuhnau** Was Gott tut das ist wohlgetan **Schein** Nun komm der Heiden Heiland. Banchetto musicale No 20 **Schelle** Aus der Tiefen. Canon on 'Nun komm der Heiden Heiland'

The Bach Players / Nicolette Moonen

Hyphen Press Music © HPM012 (63' • DDD • T/t)



As ever The Bach Players have devised a programme to get you listening with

fresh ears, in this case to cantatas by four different holders of the post of Leipzig's Thomaskantor, passing in chronological order from Johann Hermann Schein, through Johann Schelle and Johann Kuhnau and ending with JS Bach. (Two mid-17th-century incumbents, Tobias Michael and Sebastian Knüpfer, miss out.)

The trajectory is a clear one, from Schein's tastefully decorated chorale melody to Schelle's beautiful motet-style setting of Psalm 130, Kuhnau's more sectional *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* – chorale-rooted but effectively varied (love the timorous short-note chords in the fifth verse) – and Bach's *Die Elenden sollen essen*. Composed in 1723, this last



Ralph Allwood directs the Old Royal Naval College Trinity Laban Chapel Choir in works by the celebrated baritone and composer Roderick Williams

was Bach's inaugural cantata in Leipzig, from which his congregation would have deduced that their new man's style was rather more modern-sounding than Kuhnau's, clearly cast in the Italianate recitative-and-aria cantata mould and better able (as comparison of Bach's and Kuhnau's opening pages swiftly reveals) to conjure an immediate emotional state.

The Bach Players perform these works with style, expertise and collective purpose. The single strings make a light but firmly shaped sound, while also showing an elegant foot in a quick and quirky suite from Schein's *Banchetto musicale*. The four singers, too, are strong, clear and well matched in ensemble, but balance between instruments and voices is not always so successful; while it is perfect in the Schelle, the oboes get pushed further away as the ensemble grows, so that by the time we arrive at the Bach they really seem to be out on the edge. Some of the solo singing is affected too; Robert Davies's lowest notes are hard to hear, for instance. It is, I guess, intended as more of a 'concert sound' to reflect the programme's origins, but is a little untidy, and I don't see what harm there is in

smartening up the studio version with a bit more focus here and there. An attractive and interesting disc nonetheless.

Lindsay Kemp

'Celebrating English Song'

Britten The Ploughboy. The Salley Gardens

Butterworth Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad

Finzi Let Us Garlands Bring **Gurney** Black Stichel. Captain Stratton's Fancy. Lights Out.

Sleep **Ireland** Great Things. In Boyhood. Sea

Fever. Youth's Spring Tribute **Moeran** The Pleasant Valley **Quilter** Weep you no more, sad

fountains **Vaughan Williams** Silent Noon. The

Vagabond **Venables** Flying Crooked. A Kiss

Warlock Jillian of Berry

Roderick Williams bar **Susie Allan** pf

Somm © SOMMCD0177 (73) • DDD • T)



this delightful programme. Moreover, it is delivered by a true specialist, Roderick Williams, who, with his mellow tone and perfect intonation, somehow manages to find the right tempo, a range of the most

appropriate nuances and the perfect emotional tenor for each song. He is also supported admirably by Susie Allan, who provides that complementary articulation and gesture from the piano.

Butterworth's first collection of poems by Housman, *A Shropshire Lad*, is the most impeccable encapsulation of the poet's biting cynicism and introspective melancholy, sentiments which are brought out here by Williams with a panache in the lyrical numbers such as 'Loveliest of trees' and 'Look not in mine eyes', with remonstrance in 'Think no more, lad' and secrecy in 'Is my team ploughing'. Other classic songs form part of the programme. Vaughan Williams's early setting of 'Silent Noon' not only possesses an inspiring pathos but Williams's golden vocal quality brings out the erotic nature of Rossetti's colourful vocabulary (I'd love to hear him sing the even more erotic setting by Farrar). Quilter is aptly represented by the wistful 'Weep you no more, sad fountains', an affecting, plaintive utterance, and the range of Gurney's prodigious yet complex output can be perceived in 'Sleep' (perhaps the finest setting of Beaumont and Fletcher's

poem), written while he was a student under Stanford, 'Black Stichel', a stormy post-war reflection, and the enigmatically haunting 'Lights Out', written on the cusp of coherence.

While Ireland's art as a song-writer is epitomised by 'Sea Fever', though sung here in a manner that avoids the established stereotypical demeanour of the ballad, the grey skies and ruminative character of the composer are beautifully embodied in 'In Boyhood' and 'Youth's Spring Tribute'. The metrically fluctuating 'Jillian of Berry' by Warlock and Moeran's deeply expressive 'The Pleasant Valley' furnish contrasting interludes, as do the two delicious lyrics of Ian Venables (whose art has been clearly inspired by his English forebears), but Williams comes into his own in Finzi's Shakespeare collection *Let Us Garlands Bring*, where the centrepiece, 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun', embodies not only the composer's inimitable powers of interpretation and vocal rhythm but also Williams's ability to project and sustain Finzi's long, lyrical melodic lines. This is a treat. **Jeremy Dibble**

'Echoes through Space and Time'

Berg Sieben frühe Lieder - No 3, Die Nachtigall; No 7, Sommertage **Brahms** Die Mainacht, Op 43 No 2. Junge Lieder I, Op 63 No 5 **Korngold** Liebesbriefchen, Op 9 No 4. Sterbelied, Op 14 No 1 **R Strauss** Acht Gedichte aus 'Letzte Blätter', Op 10 - No 3, Die Nacht; No 4, Die Georgine. Wie sollten wir geheim sie halten, Op 19 No 4. Ruhe, meine Seele!, Op 27 No 1. Blauer Sommer, Op 31 No 1. Leise Lieder, Op 41 No 5. Fünf Lieder, Op 48 - No 1, Freundliche Vision; No 4, Winterweih. Ich wollt' ein Sträusslein binden, Op 68 No 2. Der Stern, Op 69 No 1 **Wolf** Goethe-Lieder - No 27, Die Bekehrte; No 29, Anakreons Grab **Zemlinsky** Fünf Gesänge, Op 7 - No 3, Meeraugen; No 5, Sonntag
Claudia Moulin sop **Grégory Moulin pf**
Odradek © ODRCD338 (56' • DDD)



It might not be immediately clear from the cover what this recital actually is.

Claudia and Grégory Moulin are billed as 'voice and piano', while the pretentiousness of the title itself echoes through a waffly introductory note by the two artists. What we in fact have is a rather nicely planned programme, in which pairs of Strauss songs alternate with pairs of songs by composers from in and around the same aesthetic

orbit. It's a selection that Claudia Moulin (née Galli) and her partner have been touring in recital for some time.

Alas, though, the packaging seems to reflect their general approach, which is similarly concerned less with specifics, it seems, than impressions. And things don't get off to a good start with a mistake in the left hand of the piano part in the first bar of 'Anakreons Grab', given a tone higher than usual.

On the plus side, the soprano has a good line in the floated phrase and is a confident, unrushed performer. Her performance of Korngold's 'Sterbelied' is enjoyable and her seductive way with such songs as 'Die Nacht' is effective enough. But a quick comparison with, say, Louise Alder's account on her recent Strauss-only debut disc (Orchid, 9/17) shows that you can get more purity of tone as well as an awful lot more care with the words elsewhere.

Indeed, Claudia Moulin's German is indistinct, passive and accented; and the voice itself can't quite deliver what her approach seems to want it to, often swooping about and turning vinegary under pressure. The general emotional temperature of the disc remains tepid – you'll have to go a long way, for example, to find a more determinedly passionless account of Brahms's glorious 'Die Mainacht' – and Grégory Moulin's piano-playing, on an instrument that sounds strangely artificial, is uninvolved and fatally short on incisiveness. The release includes no texts or translations.

Hugo Shirley

'Love's Embrace'

Braunfels Drei chinesische Gesänge, Op 19
Korngold Sechs einfache Lieder, Op 9 - No 1, Schneeglöckchen; No 3, Das Ständchen; No 4, Liebesbriefchen; No 6, Sommer **Marx** Italienisches Liederbuch - No 2, Ständchen. Lieder und Gesänge: Vol 1 - No 17, Marienlied; No 22, Sommerlied; No 24, Und gestern hat er mir Rosen gebracht; Vol 2 - No 3, Der beschiedene Schäfer; Vol 3 - No 2, Waldseligkeit; No 9, Selige Nacht **Pfitzner** Fünf Lieder, Op 11 - No 4, Venus mater; No 5, Gretel. Fünf Lieder, Op 26 - No 2, Nachts; No 4, Trauerstille. Im Volkston - Untreu und Trost

Juliane Banse sop

Munich Radio Orchestra / Sebastian Weigle
BR-Klassik © 900322 (55' • DDD)



This programme brings together some of the most seductive songs of Joseph Marx,

Walter Braunfels, Korngold and Pfitzner in a nicely balanced selection. All are lovingly wrapped in orchestral garb, which is a particularly attractive proposition with the Pfitzner songs – until now available on record, so far as I can see, only with piano accompaniment.

Juliane Banse first made her mark at the lighter end of the spectrum, and the voice sounds here as though it's certainly gained in heft – once a renowned Pamina, she sings the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* for the first time this season. It has also, however, lost some purity, gaining (at least as recorded by BR-Klassik) a metallic edge.

She is persuasive in the generous Marx selection, though, turning in a particularly lovely performance of the gorgeous 'Selige Nacht' and sounding suitably sensual in 'Ständchen'. I think, given the choice, I prefer the greater steadiness of Christine Brewer, who offers these songs and more on her Marx disc for Chandos, while Jiří Bělohávek also offers more affection in the orchestral accompaniments.

Similarly, many might prefer the greater dramatic heft that Camilla Nylund offers in the three Braunfels songs – especially in the taxing 'Die Geliebte des Kriegers', where Banse is stretched. And though there's little to fault in Banse's Korngold, one can hear a greater sense of delicacy in Barbara Hendricks's luxuriously accompanied accounts. But Banse is never less than convincing on her own terms, especially in the Pfitzner numbers: she is especially excellent in the wonderful 'Venus mater', the most touching of five included here.

Sebastien Weigle and the Munich Radio Orchestra offer warm, sensitive accompaniment. Not for the first time, though, BR-Klassik offer no texts or translations, and could also have thrown in plenty more lusciousness to add to the album's somewhat measly playing time. Enough complaining, though: this is still an enjoyable programme, lovingly performed. **Hugo Shirley**

Marx – selected comparison:

Brewer, BBC SO, Bělohávek (3/09) (CHAN) CHAN10505

Korngold – selected comparison:

Hendricks, Philadelphia Orch, Welser-Möst

(12/96) (EMI/WARN) 586101-2*

Braunfels – selected comparison:

Nylund, Berlin Konzerthaus Orch, H Albrecht

(12/16) (OEHM) OC1847

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REISSUES

Hugo Shirley revisits Claudio Abbado's DG opera recordings and **James Jolly** enjoys a Gerard Schwarz birthday set

Claudio Abbado at the opera

From Verdi at La Scala to Mozart with the Mahler CO, DG has gathered together a major recording legacy

Much as Warner Classics's set of Riccardo Muti's complete Verdi recordings (12/16) had, DG's bumper box of Claudio Abbado's complete opera recordings for the label reflects his career more broadly. Both conductors have early years at London orchestras in common (Abbado at the London Symphony Orchestra; Muti with the Philharmonia), as well as halcyon days at the helm of that greatest of Italian houses, La Scala, Milan, where Abbado was installed from 1968 to 1986.

With the present box, we can chart Abbado's career further, from the shorter stints at the Vienna State Opera (1986-91) and the Berlin Philharmonic – his 12 years there, 1989-2002, sandwiched between Karajan's 33 years and Rattle's 16 – alongside work with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and, more recently, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. It's a box, too, that underlines the sharp focus of Abbado's repertory. We have only six Verdi operas, for example, as opposed to the 11 Muti recorded for EMI; and Muti's tally has since been supplemented by a CSO Live *Otello*, a work that Abbado conducted at the 1996 Salzburg Easter Festival with his Berliners but never recorded.

But at least two of Abbado's Verdi sets lay claim to be among the finest of all: his *Simon Boccanegra* and *Macbeth*, dating from the late '70s. The former originated in one of the great productions of Abbado's La Scala tenure, by Giorgio Strehler, and has never really been surpassed either in its casting (Piero Cappuccilli, in his formidable prime, sings the title role, with Nicolai Ghiaurov as Fiesco and the young Mirella Freni and José Carreras as Amelia and Adorno) or in its capturing the shadowy colours of the score – thrillingly played and conducted. The *Macbeth*, another undisputed classic, is hardly less fine.

The other Verdi recordings in the box are more problematic. One, of course, has great musicological importance in that



Claudio Abbado's operatic discography contains two Gramophone Award-winning sets of Rossini and Beethoven

it presented the full five-act *Don Carlos*, replete with ballet and freshly unearthed new material. The original issue came with an in-depth analysis from Andrew Porter which one really misses here: DG's documentation runs only to tricky-to-negotiate track and cast listings, several lovely pictures and an eloquent general appreciation of Abbado's operatic legacy from James Jolly.

The *Don Carlos* also has casting issues, not least in featuring primarily Italians offering up indistinct French. Plácido Domingo is an exception as a reliable Carlos, but Ruggero Raimondi is a woolly, woozy sounding Philippe, and neither Katia Ricciarelli nor Lucia Valentini Terrani would represent ideal casting as Elisabeth and Eboli in any language. And where's the fire in Abbado's conducting?

Ricciarelli isn't a great deal more convincing opposite Domingo as Aida or the *Ballo Amelia*, however well conducted those sets are. The Spanish tenor is better heard in these roles elsewhere (primarily, in fact, on Muti's recordings); and Abbado's live *Ballo* from Vienna with Luciano Pavarotti, recently reissued on Orfeo, shouldn't be overlooked either (7/16). DG's sound at La Scala in the 1980s – fussy and overproduced – is not a patch (no pun intended) on the natural aural picture they produced there earlier.

These 'middle period' Abbado Verdi recordings are a bit of a low-point in the set, then, but things are by and large redeemed by the luminous and luxuriously cast *Falstaff* from Berlin, with Bryn Terfel larger-than-life as the Fat Knight and the Philharmoniker on terrific form. There are

more Verdian treats from the BPO, too, in the shape of Roberto Alagna's suave recital, recorded originally for EMI in 1997, and an irresistible disc of overtures and preludes. Alagna's duet disc with Angela Gheorghiu clearly proved too complicated to wangle for inclusion, but we have an exciting early disc of 'Great Scenes' with Ghiaurov and the LSO, as well as the La Scala album of choruses.

The LSO also plays an important role in two more undisputed classics, Abbado's accounts of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *La Cenerentola*, both recorded in 1971, in London and Edinburgh respectively. The orchestral playing and conducting are superb, offering both sparkle and a welcome hint of gravitas – tempos are often on the steady side. The casts, predominantly Italian, feature some wonderful singers, although one notices how the *bel canto* techniques of tenors, in particular, have come on in recent years. Teresa Berganza, as Rosina and Angelina, is a softer-grained mezzo than we're used to – no machine-gun coloratura here – but offers her own special charm.

She represents unusually light casting in Abbado's terrific LSO *Carmen*, too, recorded, using the Oeser edition, in 1977 with Domingo popping up again as a fine Don José (DG also squeezes in half an hour of highlights from a 1997 Berlin 'Salute to Carmen', featuring Anne Sofie von Otter, Alagna and Terfel, to the third disc). Domingo's final appearance in the box, though, is a less happy one, an ill-advised *Barbiere* from 1992 that captures his first foray into baritone repertoire. He sounds no more like a baritone here than he does now, and the result is slack and unconvincing, and not helped by Kathleen Battle's preening Rosina, picking at her notes. The COE's playing is wonderful, as one would expect, and Abbado's conducting is very fine, as it is on a disc of Rossini overtures that's also included.

Another opera Abbado recorded twice – a decision blissfully unconcerned by any economic concerns or practicalities, it seems – was Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims*. The second version, issued on Sony Classical, featured an all-star cast and the Berlin Philharmonic; the first, included here and recorded in Pesaro with the COE in 1984, features a cast every bit as fine, and won *Gramophone*'s Record of the Year in 1986. A vibrant *L'italiana in Algeri* dates from a little later, featuring the cast that opened Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's production at the Vienna State Opera in 1987, led by a ballsy Agnes Baltsa and a bluff Raimondi.

Vienna is the site of a luminous recording of *Lohengrin*, the only Wagner opera Abbado tackled. It is exquisitely conducted and played, and beautifully recorded too. It captures Waltraud Meier's Ortrud in her prime; Hartmut Welker's Telramund can't quite match her. There have been steadier Lohengrins than Siegfried Jerusalem and more involving Elsas than Cheryl Studer's, but this is nonetheless a terrific recording.

Hints – tantalising indeed – of what we might have had from Abbado in other Wagner can be heard in a selection of orchestral music, and scenes and arias with Terfel (recorded in 2000-1), both with the Berlin Philharmonic. They and an even fresher Terfel can also be heard in a Wagner Gala from 1993, along with Studer, Jerusalem and Meier.

Two of Abbado's Verdi sets lay claim to be among the finest of all: his Simon Boccanegra and Macbeth

Abbado's Vienna years take us in three further new directions. There's his flowing, lucid *Pelléas et Mélisande*, beautifully captured in the studio with a largely Francophone cast – the main exceptions being Maria Ewing wide-eyed Mélisande and Christa Ludwig's Geneviève. Mussorgsky's massive *Khovanshina* was captured live at the Staatsoper, and is a hugely imposing and impressively paced achievement – there's another bonus here in the form of his brief cantata *Joshua*, added onto the third disc. For *Boris Godunov*, a work with which Abbado was perhaps even more closely associated, one has to go to Sony Classical and his lavish Berlin recording. His Vienna *Wozzeck*, with an electric lead couple of Hildegard Behrens and Franz Grundheber is unmissable, but also, it should be noted, available as a fine DVD (not included here).

Abbado's definitive account of Schubert's *Fierrabras* also dates from his Vienna years, though was recorded at performances not at the Staatsoper but the Theater an der Wien, and with the COE. Beautifully cast, it still sounds as fresh as ever. From the VPO comes a *Figaro* that still sounds good, and is notable for an especially vivid Cherubino from Cecilia Bartoli. But it's somewhat baffling, given the drama Abbado could bring to Verdi and the fizz he instilled in Rossini, that his COE *Don Giovanni* is such a limp affair. It's impeccably played, and there's some good

singing, unsurprisingly, from a cast led by Simon Keenlyside and Terfel, but little or no sense of fire.

Some bonus Mozart arias with Anna Netrebko, squeezed onto that opera's third disc, go some way to making up for that disappointment, as does the wise and wonderful late *Zauberflöte* (recorded in 2005) with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. There's a final treat, too, in the form of the 2010 *Fidelio*, a *Gramophone* Award winner hailed in these pages by Richard Osborne as 'the best-conducted *Fidelio* since Furtwängler's' (9/11). The Mahler CO is bolstered by the Lucerne Festival Orchestra; Nina Stemme and Jonas Kaufmann lead the cast; dialogue is omitted.

And there we are. The riches in this box are such that it seems churlish to lament what it might also have contained had more been recorded – it's a shame, in particular, that none of the new opera Abbado performed made it into disc – or had the conductor spread his wings further in terms of repertoire. The one Richard Strauss opera Abbado conducted, *Elektra*, is available on DVD (and a New Year gala released on Sony Classical features, among other things, a *Rosenkavalier* trio with a young Renée Fleming). But one wonders what he might also have made of, say, Tchaikovsky's stage works, of Puccini, or – the natural follow-up to *Lohengrin* – *Parsifal*.

The extra goodies in the box – which alongside those already mentioned include recitals from Netrebko and Kaufmann, as well as a mixed gala from Berlin – offer hints of what he might have brought to a broader repertoire. So much here is wonderful, and, despite the utilitarian documentation, this reasonably priced box (60 discs for about £95) still has an air of lavishness. There are a couple of duds, but it will nonetheless provide many hours of operatic pleasure. **Hugo Shirley**



THE RECORDING

Claudio Abbado - The Opera Edition
DG © (60 discs) 479 8008

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BWV 110 «unser mund sei voll lachens»

BWV 132 «bereitet die wege, bereitet die bahn!»

BWV 138 «warum betrübst du dich, mein herz»

BWV 009 «es ist das heil uns kommen her»

BWV 140 «wachet auf, ruft uns die stimme»

BWV 166 «wo gehest du hin»

BWV 173 «erhöhtes fleisch und blut»

BWV 184 «erwünschtes freudenlicht»

BWV 191 «gloria in excelsis deo»

BWV 029 «wir danken dir, gott, wir danken dir»

BWV 146 «wir müssen durch viel trübsal»

BWV 119 «preise, jerusalem, den herrn»

BWV 056 «ich will den kreuzstab gerne tragen»

BWV 095 «christus, der ist mein leben»

Gerard Schwarz at 70

Gerard Schwarz belongs to that rare breed of conductor (Neeme Järvi and Richard Hickox are others) who combine a healthy appetite for rare or neglected repertoire with the ability to create, in the studio, performances of concert-hall immediacy and precision. Schwarz turned 70 last autumn, and the occasion was marked by the release of a 30-CD set, **The Gerard Schwarz Collection**, his own selection of some of his favourite recordings (drawn from a host of different labels, including Delos, for whom he made the bulk of his recordings of Americana, Naxos, EMI, Sony Classical and others).

His service to American symphonic music has been astounding and opened our ears to some real treasures

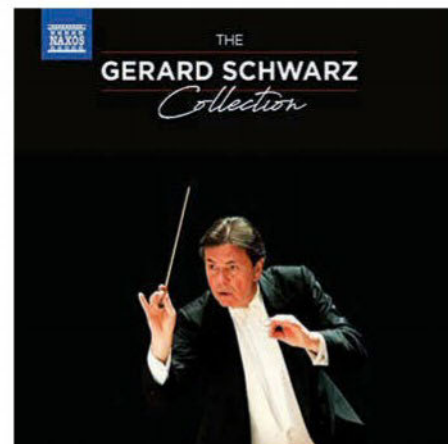
Schwarz was appointed, aged 25, Co-Principal Trumpet of the New York Philharmonic (during the Boulez years), a post he held until 1977, during which time he recorded quite extensively as a soloist (there's a superb performance of Peter Maxwell Davies's *Sonata* here) as well as with the American Brass Quintet and his own New York Trumpet Ensemble. He made five recordings for Nonesuch, some of which are included and which reveal a player with a gleaming, focused tone and 'the good taste and fine judgement' (Schwarz's own phrase used to describe his approach to Baroque and Renaissance repertoire) when it came to playing older musics on a modern instrument. He sounds terrific in Bach's Second *Brandenburg Concerto* made with his Y Chamber Symphony (now the New York Chamber Symphony) in 1980 where he not only prepared the edition but also conducted. Thereafter, he laid down his trumpet and focused on conducting.

In many ways, Schwarz's early years remind me of Sir Neville Marriner who also emerged from a major orchestra, worked with chamber orchestras (primarily the ASMF) and later branched out by working with symphony orchestras. Marriner was the first conductor of the Los Angeles CO and Schwarz his immediate successor (1978-86): not only did he expand the ensemble's repertoire but he introduced a lot of American music to their diet, much of it recorded. A particular favourite of mine here is the trio of works by Victor Herbert made in

LA – the *Suite for Cello and Orchestra*, *Three Compositions for String Orchestra* and the *Serenade* for strings. The sound of Hollywood never seems far away and these LA players do a fantastic job. Another lovely disc – and my guess is that this music sits right at the heart of Schwarz's musical centre of gravity – combines pieces by Schreker (*Kammersymphonie*), Hindemith (*Kammermusik* No 1), Busoni (*Concertino* for clarinet) and Honegger (*Concerto da camera*). An all-Schoenberg recording from LA is very classy – the *Concerto* for String Quartet and Orchestra (after Handel), the *Chamber Symphony No 1* and the *Op 16 Orchestral Pieces* in a chamber-orchestra arrangement. And on a lighter note, the Shchedrin *Carmen* Ballet, after Bizet, receives a cracking performance, as does Richard Strauss's delightful *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* Suite.

For many music lovers, it will be Schwarz's 26 years at the helm of the Seattle SO and the numerous recordings that emerged, that most resonate. His service to American symphonic music has been astounding and opened our ears to some real treasures. For this collection, Schwarz clearly wanted as broad a representation as possible so shorter works take priority over symphonies, but one shouldn't complain. Of the American symphonies that *are* included there's David Diamond's wonderfully affirmative *Fourth*, William Schuman's *Third* and Howard Hanson's *First*, all performed with enormous conviction and, as these were Delos recordings, a testament to the engineering skill of Dmitry Lipay and John Eargle. Other highly appealing symphony performances here include Panufnik's *Sinfonia sacra* (No 3) and No 10, Borodin's *Third*, Dvořák's *Sixth* (a delight), Mendelssohn's *Second*, Schubert's *Third* (NYCO – very elegant), Bernstein's *Kaddish* (with the RLPO), Cherubini's in D, Mozart's *Jupiter* and Beethoven's *Eighth* (LACO), Shostakovich's *Tenth* (Queensland SO – very impressive) and the four Brahms symphonies – which are enormously satisfying, beautifully played, spontaneous in feeling and nicely paced, and were quite a discovery.

And nestling among these large works is a wonderful collection of shorter works, an absolute gift to radio programmers and, wishful thinking perhaps, concert planners too. Griffes's *The White Peacock* is a gorgeous little tone poem that wears its French influence lightly, Arthur Foote's *Suite in E* should be on every chamber



orchestra's repertoire list and Walter Piston's *Suite for Orchestra* should also be heard way more often. There's a disc that contains Elliott Carter's highly accessible ballet *The Minotaur* from 1947 alongside the *Elegy* (1952) and two canons – so nothing scary there! On the same disc there's Irving Fine's rather haunting *Notturmo* of 1951, beautifully played by the LACO. I also greatly enjoyed Schwarz's Queensland SO performance of Webern's *Langsamer Satz*, a work he arranged for a larger body of strings and which works very well.

In his extensive and highly readable note (which runs to just over 40 pages!), Schwarz confesses to 'a deep love and respect for the music of Richard Strauss', and Strauss is the most represented composer here (10 works in all) and they offer a nice cross-section of the composer's orchestral output from the small-scale (the *Divertimento* after Couperin, the heavenly *Duett-Concertino*, beautifully done by the LACO, with David Shifrin and Kenneth Munday) to some of the major tone poems (*Also sprach Zarathustra* with the RLPO appearing for the first time). Schwarz is an impressive Straussian and draws some fine playing from his orchestras. He also includes orchestral excerpts from *Die Liebe der Danae*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* – music he clearly adores.

So, a huge amount to enjoy and if you're hesitant at shelling out £40, you can stream the entire set on Spotify and Amazon (where it's a lot easier to navigate: the contents of each disc are only listed on the disc's sleeve) – and cherry-pick to your heart's content. You won't be disappointed.

James Jolly

THE RECORDING

The Gerard Schwarz Collection

Various orchestras

Naxos © (30 discs) 8 503294

LP releases

Andrew Mellor on a handful of vinyl issues from Northern Europe specially conceived for the medium

If Phase One of the post-millennium vinyl revival persuaded us that Fidelity was a red herring all along, Phase Two is going the whole hog and arguing that the sound of the record and the sound of the music are, potentially, one and the same. That concept has its roots in commercial genres but is increasingly straddling stylistic boundaries as a new generation of classical artists question the cult of perfection that holds sway in our neck of the woods. Analogue records – softer, warmer, more human and more vulnerable – are part of the project.

The Danish collective **Halvcirkel** ('Half Circle') is a physical manifestation of that concept: a string quartet with an embedded producer whose self-titled LP takes aim at notions of perfection on every level. We are presented with a sound picture equivalent to that corner-of-a-dark-room flash photography now ubiquitous in fashion magazines; the sound 'sounds' purposefully uneven, cocking its ear towards different corners of the ensemble according to the gait of each score. The performances, backed into a corner like the photographer's subject, are equally pressurised.

That makes sense in the tortured passages of Shostakovich's String Quartet No 8. Be warned: this is not a clean performance nor a hugely considered one. But the musicianship is good, the quartet's emotional blend is well developed and there is the unsettling sense of a performance taking place under duress which torpedoes 'classical' ideals of how to communicate nervousness politely. The quartet splices the Shostakovich with works by Glass, Pärt and a little tune by Carl Nielsen, threading each to and from its neighbours via interludes that can consist of little more than a single note, twisted ribbon-like through the producer's box of tricks.

The closeness and intensity of that sound picture, all the more human when exhaled from an analogue source, has a different resonance away from the nervous edge of Shostakovich. The hesitance in Pärt's *Fratres* is particularly affecting when you're listening so close, as is the fragility with which the outline of Nielsen's song 'I'm



Halvcirkel, who have embraced the medium of the LP for their recording of Shostakovich's String Quartet No 8

often glad' ('Tit er jeg glad') is traced. Best of all, perhaps, is the view we get of Glass's *Closing*, as if from under the belly of the composer's shuffling quadruped. The quartet's sparing use of vibrato reinforces the idea of a bedroom performance as much as the close sound does.

Halvcirkel's album is consciously shaped, in two semi-palindromic halves, by the two sides of the LP. 'Index', a collaboration between composer **Martin Hall** and sculptor **Ingvar Cronhammar**, goes a step further: four parts (two LPs) and an accompanying book of photography which is just as integral to the project. Hall's work is at the intersection of sound art and music. That it is so acutely linked to the images – in some cases, to the objects of the photography (Cronhammar's) rather than the photographs themselves – is clear from the fact that each of the four works is so differently built.

There is something of the sound of Fausto Romitelli's *An Index of Metals* in Hall's *Design*, which is accompanied by images of flatware. Hall's work contains some standard electroacoustic gestures, glimmering thwacks echoing into empty black holes and the like, but he has a

habit of spiking this nonchalant, hipster emptiness with naïve and often charming little melodies. *Elia*, which has its roots in a radio documentary focusing on Cronhammar's monumental sculpture of the same name, traces a flat electroacoustic horizon until a piano starts picking out the contours of a tune over the top. *Racing Cars* offers up a hard-edged, Jocelyn Pook-like counterpoint of noise types until a harp suddenly floats in and, in an affront to its traditionally heavenly role, brings the whole discourse back down to earth with a song.

Hall's soundscapes speak of the huge expanse of space, or of the visually obliterating qualities of monumental structures such as Cronhammar's sculpture *Elia*. His music makes for interesting listening next to the more earthbound vistas conjured by guitarist and composer **Kim Myhr** on 'You | Me'. Myhr literally layers his horizons; some elements are recorded separately and superimposed later on. Like those of his Hubro stablemate Building Instrument, Myhr's textures have an organic vitality referenced by the biological patterns printed on the album's inner sleeve.

Again, 'You I Me' is designed around the two halves of the vessel itself, with two quasi-symphonic slabs that spread and evolve much like early Steve Reich but also mutate and devolve too, in one case down towards low rotating throbs that mirror the mechanism of the turntable. The B-side gets more jingly-jangly but Myhr's textures are always fertile enough to look beyond themselves. Sonically as well as physically, this is music built for the turntable but as with all Hubro releases, a CD is covertly tucked into the sleeve. How very old-fashioned.

There is a parallel paradox at work in another one-track-per-side LP, 'Mouse Music' from the pianist **Mikkel Lentz**. Two aleatoric pieces use as their chassis pitches born of the random movement of a computer's mouse (the sleeve smells strongly of cheese, which I feel sure is an olfactory, analogue pun). But the mouse hasn't travelled far; the notes appear as arpeggiated clusters that outline standard harmonic procedures and suspensions.

Stretched out, each cluster emerging from the sonic wash of its predecessor's echo, the piece becomes an exercise in forensic tonality and deep minimalism that once more thrives on the cyclic rhythm of the rotating record. Lentz plays his piano with a nice touch but a wonderful feel for the music's breath and breadth. The more I listen, the more I am convinced that 'Mouse' is a pun too: that this is music built and relayed with organic, animal impulses right down to the needle travelling through the groove and the fuzzy sound that results.

Vibratory qualities are paramount on the Hardanger Fiddle, a Norwegian folk instrument that supplements the four standard strings with extra 'resonating' strings underneath. **Nils Økland** is to that instrument what his musically borderless compatriot Jan Garbarek is to the saxophone. 'Lysning', a Norwegian word that designates a forest clearing but is suggestive of the art of listening too, is the second album from Økland's own band which includes his own fiddle, violin and viola d'amore as well as saxophones, percussion, double bass, harmonium and guitar.

The music is built on improvisation, but it's an improvisatory dynamic not so much thrown at the wall in the moment as incubated slowly over time. Depending on your vantage point, there is either a mixture of disparate and unlikely genres or no genre at all. The tracks can lack the focus of the more contained, folk-based explorations propagated by Økland's colleague Elisabeth Vatn. But listen hard



Sean Hickey's recorder concerto 'A Pacifying Weapon' has been recorded by Michala Petri

and you notice Økland and Co approaching the art of improvisatory composition from the opposite side to Vatn: not via material but via sound. Økland's instruments congeal to form organisms, best heard in *Blåmyr* where the tune itself is smothered into irrelevance. *Speiling* twists itself into the thick forest of the cover image. *Bølge* is a mime game of primeval shapes rendered in unisons. Despite the constant contrasts, every piece is as reactive as the last and every one feels more sketched than cinematic. That, and the needle, threads them all together.

Sean Hickey's recorder concerto *A Pacifying Weapon* stands in direct timbral contrast to pretty much everything discussed. But its inclusion on the first LP release from its label reminds us that the presence achieved by analogue sound is just as transformative for hard-edged shouts and scrapes as it is for hand-holding hums and whispers. As the dichotomy of its title suggests, this is a piece in which swords are beat into ploughshares but with accomplished sleight of hand.

Hickey capitalises on the icy edge of his percussion-heavy wind band by channelling Shostakovich-like brutality against which the recorder is the picture of whimsical innocence. But it is the Fife

and Drums of battle that end up consoling Michala Petri's adroit flutters, making way for her final dialogue with an exotic but subtly-deployed battery of percussion. Is this filigree, agile music suited to low-fi analogue sound? This is the only record of the six that comes with a download card; Hickey's piece won't outstay its welcome should you wish to spend some time arguing the toss. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

'Halvcirkel'

Halvcirkel

Weldtfrøde Music ● WFM001

'Index'

Martin Hall and Ingvar Cronhammar

Nordsø Records ● ② NR171200027

'You I Me'

Kim Myhr *gtr*

Hubro ● HUBROLP3593

'Mouse Music'

Mikkel Lentz *pf*

TurboLentz Music ●

'Lysning'

Nils Økland Band

Hubro ● HUBROLP3598

Hickey *A Pacifying Weapon*

Michala Petri *rec* Royal Danish Academy of Music Concert Band / Jean Thorel

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Opera



Tim Ashley welcomes sparkling Piazzolla from Mr McFall's Chamber:

'Some of the best tangos and milongas ever written collide with Bach-like toccatas and fugues, jazz and piano-bar music' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**



David Vickers on an imagined French Baroque entertainment:

'The first-act conclusion alternates between woodwind-laden intimacy and trumpet-festooned splendour' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 95**

Bellini



I Puritani

Diana Damrau *sop* Elvira
Javier Camarena *ten* Arturo
Ludovic Tézier *bar* Riccardo
Nicolas Testé *bass-bar* Giorgio
Annalisa Stroppa *mez* Enrichetta
Miklós Sebestyén *bass-bar* Gualtiero
Antonio Lozano *ten* Bruno
Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Real, Madrid / Evelino Pidò

Stage director **Emilio Sagi**

Video director **Jérémye Cuvillier**

BelAir Classiques © ② DVD BAC142;

© BAC442 (3h 1' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, July 2016

Includes synopsis



This opera, Bellini's last, has a fairly silly plot, what with Cavalier Arturo abandoning Elvira on their wedding day to escort Henrietta Maria to safety, and Roundhead Riccardo – who also loves Elvira – veering between regret, anger, desire for vengeance, and sympathy. As a drama it can't compare with Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* of the same year, 1835, another opera in which the heroine loses her wits; but it contains much fine music and, given a cast of first-rate singers, it is worth reviving.

That criterion is certainly met in this production from Madrid. Diana Damrau dispatches the coloratura of 'Son vergin vezzosa' with lightness and brilliance. She is good at girlish excitement and believably mad whether throwing the furniture around or playing with the chandelier lightbulbs during 'Vieni diletto'. As her lover Arturo, Javier Camarena is at his most eloquent in the long lines of 'Credeasi, misera!' in the Act 3 finale. He understandably avoids the top F (a bullseye from John Osborn in the production from Amsterdam), but he approaches the other high notes – C sharp and D – boldly, with

no sense of strain. With his sensitive phrasing, Nicolas Testé mitigates the foursquareness of Giorgio's narration to Elvira and his later account of her madness, 'Cinta di fiori'. Above all, Ludovic Tézier's Riccardo laments his hopeless love for Elvira in an exquisitely shaped 'Ah! per sempre io ti perdei'. Evelino Pidò conducts efficiently but he is not always considerate towards his singers: Tézier and Damrau are each rushed into one of their final cadences.

I wish I could be as enthusiastic about the production. A plain set, modern props, dark fur-trimmed greatcoats for the men. The only colour comes from sashes and medals, and Enrichetta in full 17th-century fig. The chorus stand or sit in rows, as though performing an oratorio. At the end of Act 1 Elvira is positioned in front of a curtain, making it hard to discern the chorus and other soloists. Riccardo and Giorgio then play peekaboo through the strips of the curtain: not a happy effect. Act 2 opens with a man on the ground, his face hard to make out. You wonder which character it is, before discovering it's an anonymous extra. Reservations, then, but this is well worth seeing for its top-class singing. **Richard Lawrence**

Selected comparison:

Netherlands Op, Carella (3/13) (OPAR) DVD OA1091D;

ABD7111D

Bizet



Carmen

Gaëlle Arquez *mez* Carmen
Daniel Johansson *ten* Don José
Scott Hendricks *bar* Escamillo
Elena Tsallagova *sop* Micaëla
Jana Baumeister *sop* Frasquita
Marion Lebégue *mez* Mercédès
Dariusz Perczak *bar* Dancairo
Simeon Esper *ten* Remendado
Sébastien Soulès *bass-bar* Zuniga
Rafael Fingerlos *bar* Morales
Bregenz Festival Choir; Prague Philharmonic Choir; Children's Choir of Musikmittelschule Bregenz-Stadt; Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Paolo Carignani

Stage director **Kasper Holten**

Video director **Felix Breisach**

C Major Entertainment © DVD 742208;

© 742304 (124' + 14' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Bregenz Festival,

July 19 & 21, 2017

Bonus: Interviews with Kasper Holten and stage designer Es Devlin

Includes synopsis



In a brief interview included as a bonus, the designer Es Devlin talks of the challenges of creating a set for Bregenz Festival's unique lake stage. It's closer to producing public art, she notes, and the most successful designs there have been those that have taken the spectator into the realms of the surreal. And certainly what she produces for Kasper Holten's staging of *Carmen* is striking: cards tossed into the air by a pair of vast hands extending out of the water, those that have already tumbled down offering the playing area for singers dwarfed by the scale of it all.

In his interview, Holten says he's keen to steer clear of the Spanish clichés on the one hand, and to examine Carmen as a real person on the other. This he does by giving a little prehistory in the Act 1 prelude: we see Carmen as a young girl learning the power of her kisses to procure what she wants. It's no earth-shattering insight but it does form the basis for a central performance from Gaëlle Arquez that is unusually three-dimensional, occasionally communicating a touching remorse and reflection.

It helps, too, that the French mezzo is a striking, captivating performer, wrapping all and sundry around her little finger. She launches herself fearlessly into the lake to make her escape and even seems to relish the rain that starts to pour down at the beginning of the second act. (This film is an amalgam of the first two performances, and the run's first night was almost rained off; there's evidence of a stiff breeze blowing throughout.)



Lightness and brilliance: Javier Camarena and Diana Damrau with top-class singing in Bellini's *I Puritani* from Madrid

Any wider sense of characterisation, though, is severely undercut by the fact that there is barely any dialogue or recitative. A work that usually lasts nearer three hours is cut down to come in at around two and the whole thing at times feels more like a series of staged highlights: in the second act, for example, we rattle through the *Chanson bohème*, Toreador's song, quintet and duo with barely time to catch breath.

There are a few attempts to spice things up with a bit of violence and raunchy choreography (some of it making use of the lake itself), and Holten finds a new murder weapon for the powerfully realised final scene. In Anja Vang Kragh's appealingly eccentric costumes, Carmen starts off in unevenly rolled-up dungarees over her red dress; the factory girls look as though they'd rather be washing cars in a hip hop video. Ultimately, though, the drama offers little of the three-dimensional grandeur we get from the set.

And beyond Arquez the singing is hardly exceptional. Daniel Johansson's Don José is a tad utilitarian of tone, Scott Hendricks's Escamillo short on charm and vocal allure. Elena Tsallagova does what she can as a Micaëla who is given the standard mousy-frump treatment. Paolo Carignani conducts

well enough, but, even with all the cuts, still sounds as though he's in a rush to get back to the shelter of his hotel room.

Hugo Shirley

Debussy

DVD

Pelléas et Mélisande

Marc Mauillon *bar* Pelléas
Jenny Daviet *sop* Mélisande
Laurent Alvaro *bass-bar* Golaud
Stephen Bronk *bass-bar* Arkel
Emma Lyrén *mez* Geneviève
Julie Mathevet *sop* Yniold
Stefano Olcese *bass* Doctor/Shepherd
Chorus and Orchestra of Malmö Opera /
Maxime Pascal

Stage director Benjamin Lazar

Video director Corentin Leconte

BelAir Classiques © DVD BAC144; © BAC544
(178' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 &
PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Malmö Opera, May 2016



The challenging Malmö company from the southern tip of Sweden looked largely to France (and, intriguingly, to

experience of the Baroque) for the artistic make-up of its 2016 production of Debussy's opera. Three of the main principals, conductor, stage director and design team all hail from there. The result is a fresh look at the aesthetic of the work but a frustratingly incomplete one.

The opera's Allemonde location becomes here a unit set totally invaded by the forest which in Maeterlinck's text has dominated both the characters' imaginations and become the actual setting for some scenes. Other necessary material elements – balcony, fountain and old man Arkel's throne – are suggested by modern-looking structures permanently sited among the plentiful trees, rather like an outdoor holiday camp. It's a potentially liberating alternative to the heavy Romantic look often given to the piece in performance (or the imprecise symbolism once applied by Josef Svoboda at Covent Garden) but is insufficiently used in the action to lead anywhere much.

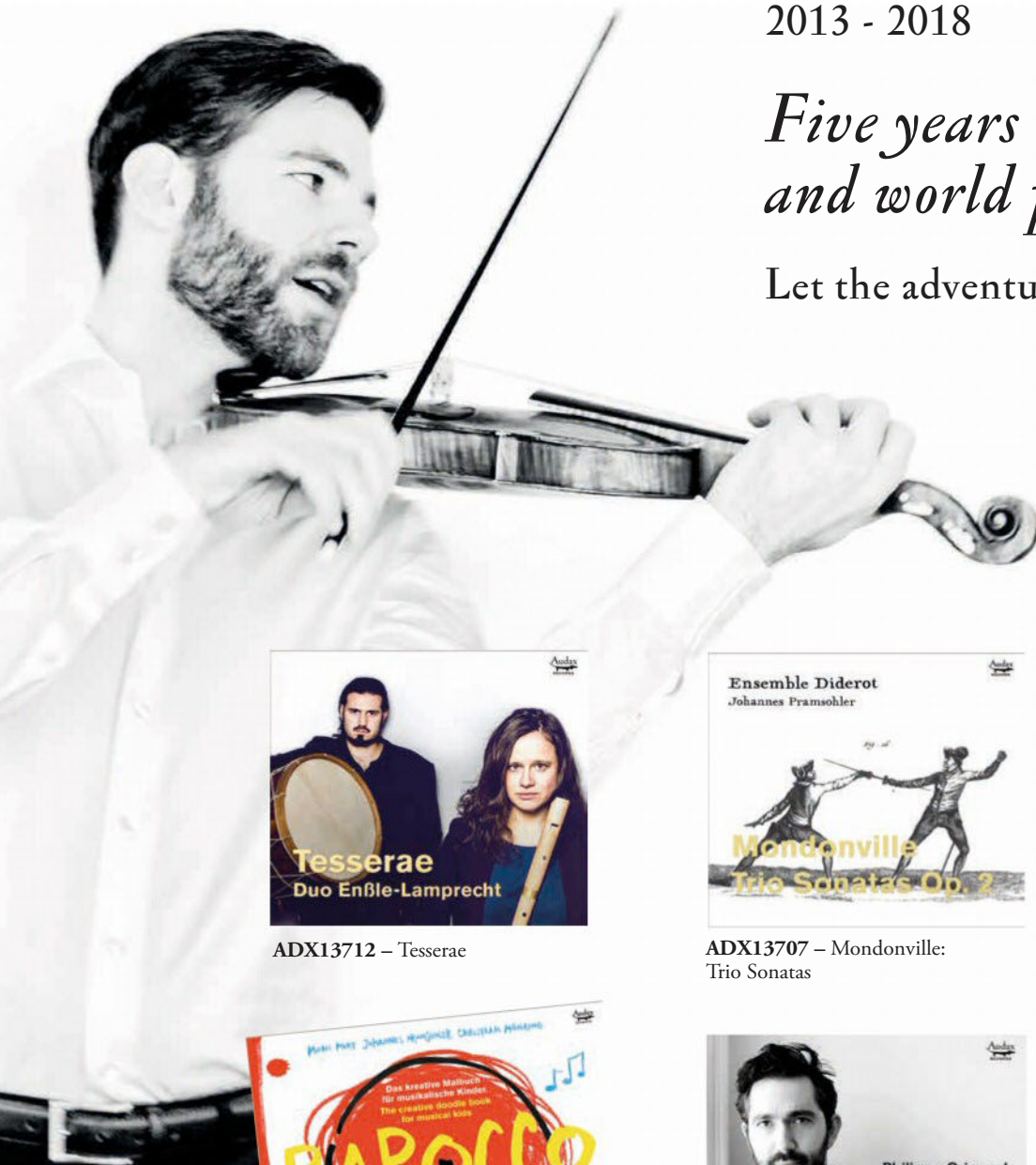
We're in a more modern world costume-wise than Maeterlinck's original play suggests with the principals (Geneviève aside) free of habitual over-dressing. Jenny Daviet and Marc Mauillon's near-lovers, in young persons' 1960s pastel shades and cut,

STAY CURIOUS

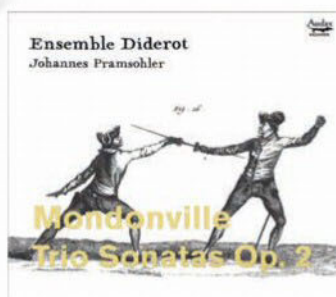
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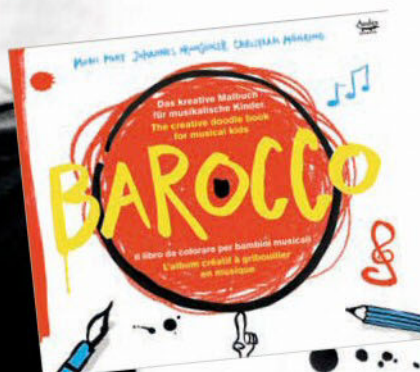
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Keyboard



ADX13711 – Ristori: Cantatas for
Soprano with Maria Savastano



Larger than life: Frederica von Stade and Joyce DiDonato steal the show in Jake Heggie's *Great Scott*

could have walked straight out of a *nouvelle vague* Godard or Truffaut movie – another interesting alternative direction for the text's complex symbolism that's not followed through. Their acting and singing (Mauillon's publicity describes him as a 'baritenor') never tries to force the opera's deliberate limiting of their naturalistic characters into mere weirdness. Daviet also is clear about showing Mélisande's fear of the big, wide world. Stephen Bronk's Arkel is solid although little has been made of the character apart from physical ageing. Laurent Alvaro works hard with his face to make Golaud's confusions and frustrations clear to the audience. The child Yniold, as so often in bigger houses in the past, is a soprano but Julie Mathevet does a good (if more mature) 'boy'. The production here harks back to the play in giving Yniold a roaming on-set sequence of silent appearances to help build a claustrophobic atmosphere around the court of Allemonde.

The Malmö orchestra play most alertly for conductor Pascal. In keeping with the new directions sought by the stage production he secures a harder, less Romantic Debussy sound which is more

resonant of slightly later contemporaries such as Bartók than the proto-Wagnerian splendours of Inghelbrecht or the proto-modernity of Boulez. Sound and balance are excellent but the filming is certainly (perhaps appositely) not lavish. The performance asks a lot of interesting questions but should be sampled before committed purchase. The cameras have ignored several great *Pelléases* but the Peter Stein/Pierre Boulez Welsh National production, with its well-trained cast, remains unmissable. **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparison:

Boulez (6/94^R, 2/03^R) (DG) 073 0309GH2

Heggie

Great Scott

Joyce DiDonato *mez* Arden Scott
Ailyn Pérez *sop* Tatyana Bakst
Frederica von Stade *mez* Winnie Flato
Nathan Gunn *bar* Sid Taylor
Anthony Roth Costanzo *counterten* Roane Heckle
Kevin Burdette *bass* Eric Gold/Vittorio Bazzetti
Rodell Rosel *ten* Anthony Candolino
Michael Mayes *bar* Wendell Swann
The Dallas Opera Chorus and Orchestra /
Patrick Summers
 Erato  2 9029 59407-8 (156' • DDD)

Recorded live at The Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House at the AT&T Performing Arts Center, Dallas, October 30, November 1, 4 & 7, 2015
 Includes synopsis



There's a cunning (and witty) interplay of ideas at work here. Sport versus Art,

better yet American Football versus Opera; an opera within an opera, better yet an Italian opera within an American opera. You can absolutely smell librettist Terrence McNally's glee at getting to channel his own not-so-secret passion for high-end music theatre (be it opera or musical theatre or indeed his play about Maria Callas, *Master Class*) into a piece that positively revels in the mad extravagance of opera while embracing the grace and gorgeousness of the American lyric stage. It was always written in the stars that the librettist of two great American musicals – *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* and *Ragtime* – should collaborate with the most successful and most internationally recognised exponent

of American opera, Jake Heggie, and this latest of their endeavours is a wholesale love-in of all that rocks their respective worlds.

So here it is: a large American city, a respected but struggling opera company and a thriving professional football team. Returning to save the company, American Opera, that launched her career is international opera star Arden Scott – in the larger-than-life personage of Joyce DiDonato – and the long-lost opera that she herself discovered, *Rosa dolorosa, figlia di Pompei*. The only problem is that the premiere falls on the same night as the home football team's first national championship, the Super Bowl. And if that's not in itself a culture clash of operatic proportions I don't know what is.

The jokes are there for McNally's picking – all the backstage intrigue and rivalry (not least that centred on the obligatory Russian soprano), the company infatuations and antagonisms. Heggie gets to spoof the sub-Rossinian *bel canto* on an elaborate scale (up to and including those celebrated crescendos) but in so doing manages to transcend mere pastiche in the creation of genuinely elegant and beautiful lines and authentic vocal fireworks that challenge and tax DiDonato as surely as the roles in her core repertoire. The operatic set pieces here truly have a ring of authenticity about them. But then there is the other element, the American element, where the personal and the intimate aspects of the plot – like Scott reunited with her one-time lover Sid (Nathan Gunn) – mine a seam of music where Heggie's Broadway inheritance is inescapable. As we know from his other operas (not least *Dead Man Walking* and the astonishingly good *Moby-Dick*), Heggie does not hide behind the fanciful or the tricky or the unsingably 'cutting edge' but rather serves and illuminates his texts through the honesty and gratefulness of his vocal writing. His gift for melody (and I've said this too often) is special.

Take the climactic trio 'It's always the song, not the singer', where the three key women in the piece (DiDonato, Frederica von Stade and Ailyn Pérez – quite a trio) muse on the art which ultimately puts them at the service of their material. This is Heggie's *Rosenkavalier* trio and it harkens back to a brilliant little scene where Scott invokes the ghost of her composer Vittorio Bazzetti to seek reassurance that there is purpose and the promise of posterity in her endeavours. And his riposte – 'American Opera – I didn't think there was such a thing' –

wryly goes to the heart of *Great Scott's* charm. The skill here, from both composer and librettist, is the way in which the comedic melds with the wistfully humane. But there are also the bullseye ironic moments like the laugh-out-loud coup of having the Russian soprano superstar, Tatyana (Pérez), sing the Star-Spangled Banner at the Super Bowl. Inevitably you can't hear the tune (or the words) for the embellishments. As in-jokes go, this is a honey.

It's very easy to put down a piece like *Great Scott* by arguing that it doesn't push the envelope, musically or stylistically, that it rejoices in the past not the future, that it courts popular appeal. But tell that to the very vocal audience of this Dallas Opera premiere. And, *pace* Maestro Bazzetti, there is such a thing as American Opera – and it's alive and well and living in the imagination of practitioners like Heggie and McNally.

Edward Seckerson

Lully

Alceste

Judith Van Wanroij *sop* Alceste/La Gloire
 Edwin Crossley-Mercer *bass-bar* Alcide
 Emiliano Gonzalez Toro *ten*... Admète/Second Triton
 Ambroisine Bré *mez*
 Céphise/Nymph of the Tuileries/Proserpine
 Douglas Williams *bass-bar* Lycomède/Charon
 Étienne Bazola *bar* Cléante/Straton/Pluton/Éole
 Bénédicte Tauran *sop*
 Nymph of the Marne/Thétis/Diane
 Lucía Martín Cartón *sop*
 Nymph of the Seine/Afflicted Woman/Ghost
 Enguerrand de Hys *ten*
 First Triton/Follower of Pluton

Namur Chamber Choir; Les Talens Lyriques /

Christophe Rousset

Aparté 10 2 AP164 (151' • DDD)

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



'Next to Euripides or Gluck, Lully's *Alceste* is a joke', was Joseph Kerman's withering verdict in *Opera as Drama* (Knopf: 1956). Lully's enemies – and he had many – mounted a concerted attack on the opera after its 1674 Paris premiere, ridiculing its mix of tragic and comic genres. The great Racine derided librettist Quinault's casual, pick-and-mix attitude to Euripides. But to no avail: Lully's second *tragédie en musique* was an immediate success with Louis XIV and his court, and long remained a staple of the Paris Opéra. The king doubtless lapped up the Prologue, beginning as a toe-curlingly sycophantic tribute to Louis-as-military

hero and ending with a divertissement that celebrates the hedonism of the Versailles court. No one could deny that the tragic force of the original is diluted and diffused by ballet, spectacle and a comic sub-plot – though even Kerman praises the scene of mourning for Alceste in Act 3. The characters' appalling dilemmas are barely explored. But to Lully's numerous admirers this was beside the point. What the king and his retinue expected, and got in spades, was a familiar Classical story as a pretext for sybaritic entertainment.

I wouldn't rank *Alceste* as highly as *Atys* or – Lully's masterpiece – *Armide*. The little triple-time solos that grow out of the stylised recitative tend to have a wan, predictable charm; and Lully's harmonic imagination is more constricted than in the best of his later operas. But there is plenty to savour, whether in the many instrumental numbers, plaintive, amorous or bellicose, the delightful comic scene in Act 4 for the mercenary Charon, happy to fleece even the dead, or – the emotional heart of the opera – the poignant *pompe funèbre* for Alceste in Act 3, culminating in a choral chaconne that sounds distinctly Purcellian to British ears.

Until now *Alceste* has been decently served by the live recording from Jean-Claude Malgoire (Disques Montaigne, 4/93). But this new version, recorded in the Salle Gaveau, Paris, after performances at the Beaune Festival, eclipses it in polish, theatrical verve, casting and sound quality. Few if any conductors match Christophe Rousset's understanding of Lullian style and rhetoric; and few could complain that he tweaks the sparse orchestration here and there when the effect is so theatrically vivid. His pacing and inflecting of the music seems unerring, not least in his graceful shaping of cadences and his sensitivity to the vein of pastoral nostalgia in the final divertissement (Malgoire and his forces sound altogether blunter here). Chorus and orchestra, so well versed in the idiom, are invariably vital, and Rousset draws compelling performances from his singers, all of whom sound at ease in the tricky-to-master art of natural French declamation. Even among the non-Francophone singers, diction throughout is a model of clarity and point.

In the title-role Judith Van Wanroij, with a touch of metal in her limpid tone, seems ideally cast, bringing a mingled intensity and delicacy of inflection to her moving laments in Acts 2 and 3. Equally good are the plangent and agile high



Rimsky-Korsakov's glittering folk-tale opera *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* gets an ultra-traditional staging at the Mariinsky – see review on page 91

tenor – almost an *haute-contre* – of Emiliano Gonzalez Toro as her husband Admète, and the sturdy, no-nonsense bass of Edwin Crossley-Mercer as Alcide (aka Hercules), a man without a scintilla of self-doubt who muscles his way into the Underworld, yet finally abandons his designs on Alciste to ensure a happy ending (Louis XIV doubtless saw his own image here).

Étienne Bazola's light baritone is better suited to the wind god Éole than to the subterranean pronouncements of Pluton. But Douglas Williams is splendidly incisive as Alciste's abductor Lycomède, and, abetted by Rousset, relishes his comic turn as Charon; and Ambroisine Bré brings vocal charm and guile – a touching pathos, too, in the scene of mourning – to the role of Alciste's flirtatious confidante Céphise, whose amoral, *carpe diem* philosophy ('marriage is the death of love') chimed perfectly with that of the Versailles court. More than Rameau's, Lully's heavily stylised *tragédies en musique* are likely to remain a specialist taste. But it is hard to imagine this music, often delightful, sometimes witty, intermittently touching, coming alive more vividly than it does here.

Richard Wigmore

Mozart

Le nozze di Figaro

Markus Werba *bar*..... Figaro
 Golda Schultz *sop*..... Susanna
 Carlos Álvarez *bar*..... Count Almaviva
 Diana Damrau *sop*..... Countess Almaviva
 Marianne Crebassa *mez*..... Cherubino
 Anna Maria Chiuri *mez*..... Marcellina
 Andrea Concetti *bass*..... Bartolo/Antonio
 Krešimir Špicer *ten*..... Don Basilio/Don Curzio
 Theresa Zisser *sop*..... Barbarina
 Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro alla Scala,
 Milan / Franz Welser-Möst

Stage director **Frederic Wake-Walker**

Video director **Patrizia Carmine**

C Major Entertainment © 2 DVD 743108;

© 743204 (3h 34' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live 2016

Includes synopsis



A day of torment, caprice and madness is how the key players of *Le nozze di Figaro* sum up their 24 hours. And madness – of a creative, cathartic kind – is clearly what Frederic Wake-Walker wants to inject into this 2016 production of Mozart's opera,

which replaced Giorgio Strehler's La Scala staging after 30 years. Nearly everything is to be toyed with here: not just Cherubino's undies, the Count's ego and Antonio's prize shrubbery but the very walls about our ears.

The ambiguities start during the Overture, in which zany wiggled ladies push and prod the scenery, apparently overseen by Figaro (Markus Werba); when period decoration is evoked by Antony McDonald's ever-whirling designs, it's through photos beamed on to plain sets. And the costumes! La Scala's budget for the punk-baroque frocks alone would probably cover the dowries of a hundred Susannas, although in chic Milan you can almost hear the tutting from the stalls as gentlemen revellers suddenly reveal their teeny gold shorts. And who invited the silently cavorting chap with the ape mask?

It's too much monkeying around. Wake-Walker's stagecraft isn't terrible, but nor does it tell us very much we didn't know. The tension between artifice and naturalism never resolves itself, and, as the drama moves to its finale (the garden denouement is played with lights up and with no proper garden) it becomes frustrating to see fine singer-actors with their wings clipped.

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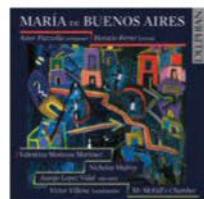
Still, Franz Welser-Möst is clearly keeping his head while all about him sometimes lose theirs: at first the orchestra sound a little stiff, but as the night goes on Welser-Möst unbends and the combination of his Austrian grace and the Italian orchestra's warmth is appealing; so is the colourful continuo accompaniment of fortepiano and cello. It's good, too, to have native wit in Andrea Concetti's grizzled Bartolo and Anna Maria Chiuri's fruity Marcellina. Krešimir Špicer picks up Don Basilio's Act 4 aria, a shaggy-dog story that's no less perplexing each time it's re-found, however enthusiastically Špicer attacks it. Marianne Crebassa's limpidly sung Cherubino is delightful.

Some *Figaro* productions pair off Figaro and the Count as if they are rival stags. But there's no macho contest between a preening fop of a Count (Carlos Álvarez, vocally authoritative) and the pragmatic fixer, Werba's Figaro, sharp and amiable, if lacking some weight in his lower register. The differences between Diana Damrau's entrancing Countess and Golda Schultz's sparkling Susanna lend extra piquancy, however – Damrau is all silver and silk, imbuing her arias with real drama and pathos; Schultz's soprano is cream and gold – and the two heart-stoppingly intertwine in the Letter duet. Thankfully, nothing intrudes on this blissful (and rare) moment of stillness. **Neil Fisher**

Piazzolla

María de Buenos Aires

Valentina Montoya Martínez *sng* *María*
Nicholas Mulroy *ten* *Voice of a Payador*/
 *Sleepy Buenos Aires Sparrow*/
 *Chief Psychoanalyst/A Voice of That Sunday*
Juanjo Lopez Vidal *sng* *Duende*
Mr McFall's Chamber / Victor Villena *bandoneón*
 Delphian ® ② DCD34186 (88' • DDD)
 Includes libretto and translation



'I play with violence', Astor Piazzolla once said. 'My bandoneón must sing and scream. Sometimes I beat the bandoneón up.' Throughout *María de Buenos Aires*, the instrument acts as a metaphysical force that engenders both desire and destruction, luring María from the Buenos Aires suburbs to the city's underworld of tango, cabaret and prostitution, before driving her to a violent end. Piazzolla's Duende, or poet-narrator, marks her passing by threatening to cut the bandoneón in two with 'a verse like a pickaxe, thirsty, total,

forbidden'. But his gesture is futile: the call of the city and its dance music transcends the grave, and María returns to Buenos Aires to walk its streets as a virgin shadow, before eventually giving birth parthenogenetically to a reincarnation of her former self.

María de Buenos Aires is usually described as a 'tango opera', though Piazzolla and his lyricist Horacio Ferrer called it an 'operita', a pun on 'operetta' and the Spanish 'obrita' or 'little work'. There's nothing 'little' about it, however, and in some ways it attempts too much. Written for singers, speakers and players, it was conceived as a multimedia piece: film played an important part in its 1968 premiere, which took place against a background of increased censorship on the part of Argentina's military government. Ferrer's riddling, hallucinatory text can consequently be seen as pushing at the limits of contemporary acceptability, though it also buckles under the weight of the demotic, erotic and sacred imagery woven into its portrait of María, the whore-cum-madonna, who embodies the history of tango itself, by turns debased, idolised and endlessly renewed. The score, however, is a tremendous synthesis of Piazzolla's work and influences, as some of the best tangos and milongas ever written collide with Bach-like toccatas and fugues, jazz and piano-bar music, all of it guided by the bandoneón's pervasive presence.

Delphian's new recording, the first for nearly 20 years, features the Edinburgh-based Mr McFall's Chamber, longtime Piazzolla champions and excellent interpreters of his work. Victor Villena's bandoneón does indeed sing and scream as he alternately seduces and harries Valentina Montoya Martínez's María on her way to death and resurrection. There are suave violin solos, and dexterous guitar and piano riffs. Rhythms are crisp and precise throughout, and the pristine sound brings out plenty of sharply focused instrumental detail. Montoya Martínez, her voice earthy and lived-in, captures the defiance and vitality that drive María on. Juanjo Lopez Vidal makes a fine Duende, incantatory in his declamation and engrossed in the story he is telling. Best of all, perhaps, is Nicholas Mulroy – in territory far removed from the Baroque works in which we usually hear him – singing milongas like one born to it. Exhilaratingly done, and a fine achievement. **Tim Ashley**

Rimsky-Korsakov



The Tale of Tsar Saltan

Edward Tsanga *bass-bar* *Tsar Saltan*
Irina Churilova *sop* *Tsaritsa Militrisa*
Varvara Solovyova *mez* *Tkachikha*
Tatiana Kravtsova *sop* *Povarikha*
Elena Vitman *mez* *Barbarikha*
Mikhail Vekua *ten* *Tsarevich Guidon*
Albina Shagimuratova *sop* *Swan-Princess*
Mariinsky Chorus and Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

Stage director **Alexander Petrov**

Video director **Anna Matison**

Mariinsky ® (DVD + Blu-ray) MAR0597 (150' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • 48kHz/16 bit & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, July 2015

Includes synopsis



I well remember this production of *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*. In 2008, for the centenary of Rimsky-Korsakov's

death, the Mariinsky Opera brought the opera to Sadler's Wells under the baton of Tugan Sokhiev. It's as traditional a staging as is possible to imagine, Vladimir Firer's designs based on Ivan Bilibin's 1937 production, itself based on Bilibin's 1905 picture book, which was a Russian classic of its time. Costumes are as bright as poster paint, while the set mostly comprises painted flats and cut-out props, giving the whole thing a two-dimensional storybook feel. This isn't at all inappropriate for Rimsky's folk-tale opera, which is packed with terrific music, many of the interludes familiar from the orchestral suite.

The opera was inspired by Pushkin's *skazka* about a tsar who is deceived into thinking his wife has borne him a monster. Both mother and son are encased in a barrel which is then thrown into the sea. The Tsaritsa and her son Guidon – miraculously now a fully grown man – wash up on the island of Buyan, where he promptly saves a swan from a kite. The swan vows to repay his kindness. Guidon is proclaimed a prince, but wishes to return to Saltan's kingdom. The swan turns him into a bumble-bee – hence the famous 'Flight' – and he stings his plotting aunts in revenge. The swan turns into the beautiful princess of Guidon's dreams and Saltan eventually sails to Buyan where he is reunited with his beloved wife and everyone is forgiven. It's fairy-tale stuff best taken at face value rather than subjected to *Regietheater* directorial *Konzept*, even if the stilted tableaux, hammy acting and herding of the chorus are out of the operatic ark.

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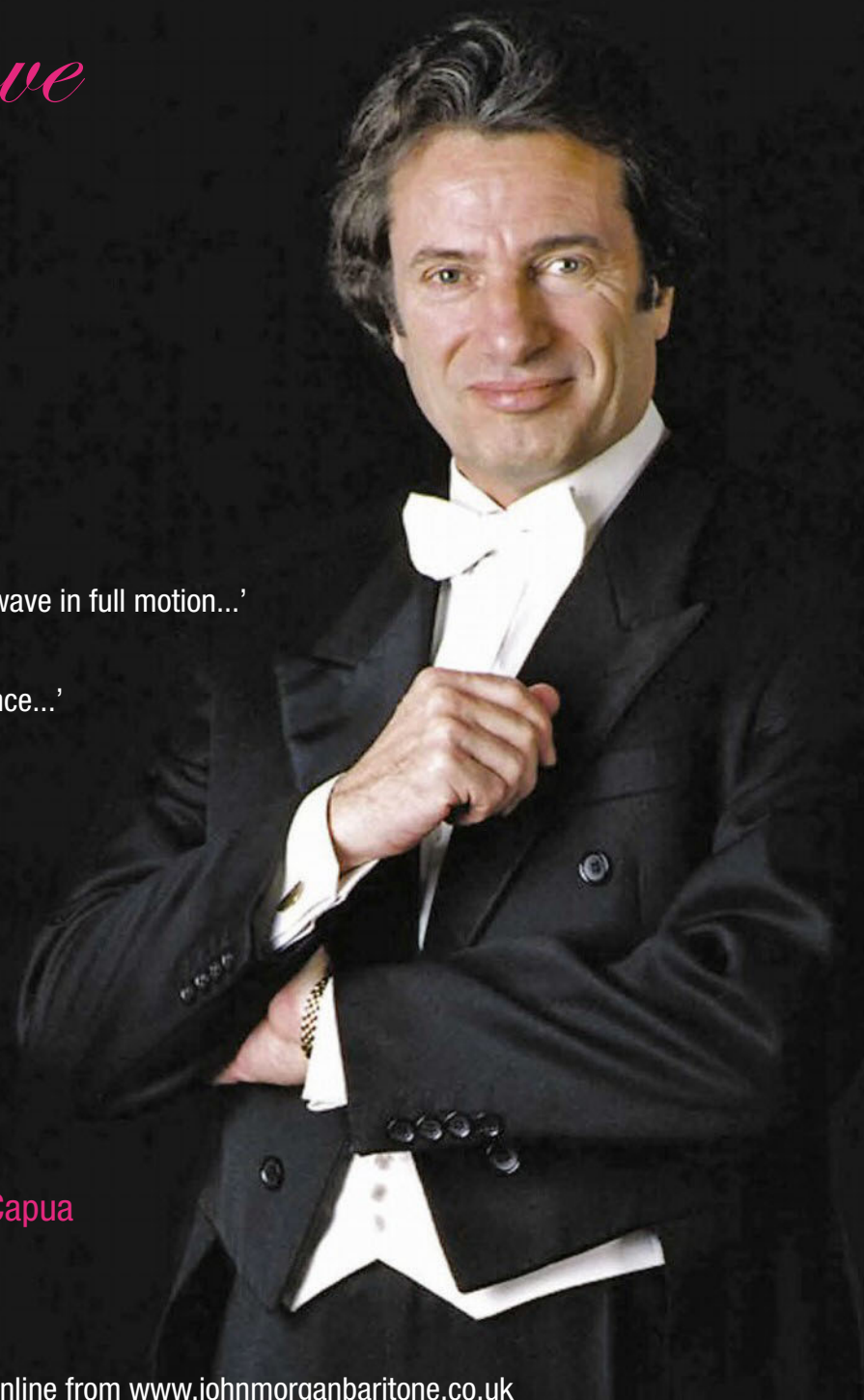
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Valery Gergiev has done more than any conductor to promote Rimsky's operas and he applies his magic touch to Saltan's glittering score, his Mariinsky band on top form. He has a fine cast, led by the late Edward Tsanga, a promising bass-baritone who died tragically young last January, aged just 37. His Saltan is firm-voiced and authoritative. Soprano Irina Churilova impresses as Militrisa, the tsaritsa, while Mikhail Vekua lends his stentorian tenor to the role of Guidon. The stellar performance, however, comes from Albina Shagimuratova, radiant of voice as the Swan-Princess, even if she is shrouded in white ostrich feathers like something you'd find in a 1920s cabaret.

Picture and sound quality are excellent, the Mariinsky offering both Blu-ray and DVD for the price of one. With these filmed performances supplementing the five operas he recorded on disc (for Philips), Gergiev is building an impressive Rimsky discography. Dare we hope for the charming, tuneful *Christmas Eve* one day or the fantastical *Mlada*? **Mark Pullinger**

Vivaldi



L'incoronazione di Dario

Carlo Allemano *ten*.....Dario
Sara Mingardo *contr*.....Statira
Delphine Galou *contr*.....Argene
Riccardo Novaro *bar*.....Niceno
Roberta Mameli *sop*.....Alinda
Lucia Cirillo *mez*.....Oronte
Veronica Cangemi *sop*.....Arpago
Romina Tomasoni *mez*.....Flora
Cullen Gandy *ten*.....Ghost of Cyrus/Apollo
Orchestra of the Teatro Regio, Turin /
Ottavio Dantone *hpd*

Stage director **Leo Muscato**

Video director **Matteo Ricchetti and Adriano Figari**

Dynamic (F) 2 DVD 37794; (F) Blu-ray 57794 (160' •

NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DD5.1 & PCM stereo • O • S)

Recorded live, April 2017

Includes synopsis



This is a staged equivalent to the CD recording welcomed by David Vickers (Naïve, 7/14). The conductor and most of the cast are the same, but the period-instrument Accademia Bizantina is replaced by the Teatro Regio's own orchestra. The opera was staged in Venice in January 1717 but Adriano Morselli's libretto dates back to 1684: it's not an opera seria, therefore, but a light confection with serious moments. This is something of a relief and Leo Muscato

directs with a sure hand, though yet again I have to deplore the compression of the standard three acts into two.

You can forget about Achaemenid Persia: the setting is a present-day Arab state, with appropriate costumes and a huge oil pipeline. The ghost of Cyrus appears, telling his daughters Statira and Argene that he is happy and they should stop mourning his death. Darius proposes that Statira should marry him, thereby enabling him to ascend the throne. Arpago and Oronte each have the same idea. Statira is exceptionally dim, much in need of advice from the courtier Niceno (who loves her), and manages to accept each suitor in turn. Argene is devious, plotting to oust her elder sister, but she eventually gets her comeuppance. Darius is none too bright, but he behaves heroically and ends up with Statira. Arpago and Oronte swear loyalty to Darius and Oronte is reconciled with Alinda, who has spent much of the opera reproaching him for reneging on his promise to marry her.

The music – recitatives and arias, not all of them *da capo* – is charming without being superficial, many of the tunes given a Neapolitan cast with their flattened supertonic harmony. One aria, Oronte's minor-key siciliano 'Non mi lusinga vana speranza', is worthy of Bach. There's one duet, Statira and Darius singing in euphonious sixths, which is all too short. The arias are mainly accompanied by the strings alone but there are some lovely solos: two violins for Argene, violin and cello for Statira, viola da gamba (supposedly emanating from an old-fashioned gramophone) for Statira and Niceno, and a comic bassoon obbligato for Niceno's 'Non lusinghi il core amante'.

Carlo Allemano, a little dry of voice, makes Darius both formidable and amusing. His rivals are well contrasted, Lucia Cirillo's Oronte dressed in a bright yellow uniform, Veronica Cangemi's Arpago a terrorist in dark glasses sporting a bandolier. Roberta Mameli's Alinda is the acme of fury at her betrayal by Oronte, Romina Tomasoni is good as Flora, the comic maidservant, and Riccardo Novaro – though he should look older – is touching as the lovelorn Niceno. (For Niceno to threaten Statira seems out of character.) Delphine Galou makes a credibly scheming Argene and Sara Mingardo, in a long auburn wig, is quite brilliant as the feather-brained Statira. Both sing like angels. Ottavio Dantone gets zestful playing from his non-period orchestra. I enjoyed this a lot. **Richard Lawrence**

'Dreams'

Bellini *La Sonnambula* – Ah! Non credea mirarti; Ah! Non giunge uman pensiero; Oh, se una volta sola; *La straniera* – Pari all'amor degli angeli; Sono all'ara; Vaneggia! Il passo sgombrisi ... Or sei pago, o ciel tremendo! **Donizetti** *Linda di Chamounix* – Ah! Tardai troppo ... O luce di quest'anima. Lucia di Lammermoor – Eccola! ... Il dolce suono; Ohimè! Sorge il tremendo fantasma ... Ardon gli incensi; S'avanza Enrico!; Spargi d'amaro pianto! **Gounod** *Roméo et Juliette* – Ah! je veux vivre **Meyerbeer** *Dinorah* – Dieu, comme cette nuit est lente ... Ombre légère **Pretty Yende** *sop* ^a**Ilaria Sicignano** *mez* ^{ab}**Piero Pretti** *ten* ^{ab}**Mattia Olivieri** *bar* ^{ab}**Carlo Lepore** *bass* ^a**Giuseppe Verdi** *Symphony Orchestra, Milan / Giacomo Sagripanti*
 Sony Classical © 88985 43015-2 (64' • DDD)
 Includes texts and translations



Just over a year after she released her debut disc, 'A Journey' (11/16), Pretty Yende

offers us a follow-up recital that presents similar virtues: a voice of lovely creamy consistency, simultaneously seductive with bright, elegant lines and agile coloratura.

Unsurprisingly, given the short intervening period, 'Dreams' focuses on similar repertoire to its predecessor: instead of Rossini, Delibes, Bellini, Gounod and Donizetti, we now have Gounod, Donizetti, Bellini and Meyerbeer – then some more Bellini. Where before we had Lucia's Act 1 aria, here we have the whole of her Mad Scene – with flute, though, fans of the glass harmonica will be upset to hear.

It's a role that Yende has been singing impressively for a while now, and the scene is impeccably sung and distinguished by some gorgeous limpid phrasing, even if it remains a little passive, dramatically speaking. Similarly, after Giacomo Sagripanti launches into the introduction of Juliette's Waltz Song with plenty of fizz, Yende doesn't seem quite as full of beans as she could be.

The soprano sings the *Linda di Chamounix* aria exquisitely, and she offers more character and temperament, too, in the two extended Bellini scenes. She is taxed a little by the enormous demands of the *Straniera* excerpt and, though she digs up some extra determination at 'Or sei pago' (around 1'40" on track 9), starts to sound a little tired, coming off her final note rather hastily. She spins some lovely long lines as Amina, a role in which she seems fully to let her hair down, and there's some welcome extra steel in the voice for Dinorah's 'Ombre légère' – for

GRAMOPHONE *Focus*

RÉGINE CRESPIN

Tim Ashley delights in a celebratory box of the French soprano's most important opera and song recitals, mostly from the 1950s and '60s



Régine Crespin's recordings range adventurously from the restrained and noble to the deliciously camp

'Régine Crespin - A Tribute'

Includes music by Berlioz, Bizet, Boito, Bolling,

Canteloube, Debussy, Duparc, Fauré, Gluck, Gounod, Halévy, Lifermann, Mascagni, Massenet, Offenbach, Ponchielli, Poulenc, Puccini, Rancurel, Ravel, Reyer, Rossini, Roussel, Sauguet, Schumann, Verdi, Wagner and Wolf

Régine Crespin sop

Erato © 10 9029 58867-1 (9h 3' • ADD)

Recorded 1958-76



To mark the 10th anniversary of Régine Crespin's death, Warner Classics has gathered together her principal operatic and song recitals, recorded for EMI, Decca and Vega between 1958 and 1967, along with substantial extracts from a selection of her complete opera recordings, some of them less readily available nowadays than others. The set includes her benchmark 1963 performances of *Shéhérazade* and *Les nuits d'été* – Crespin's favourite among her own recordings – though there's nothing from her Decca *Rosenkavalier* and *Walküre* with Solti, or her DG *Walküre* with Karajan. She can, however, be heard in an extract from Claude Bolling's soundtrack for the 1974 film *Dites-le avec des fleurs*, and there are a couple of undated 'private recordings' of her in cabaret. It's a marvellous survey of a great career,

though her discography is not without its controversies.

Crespin's own comments that she was frequently uneasy in the studio may surprise many, given the consistent quality of her singing on disc. More pertinent here, perhaps, is the fact that her voice was initially deemed difficult to record. British engineers nicknamed her 'the French cannon' on account of the sheer immensity of sound she could produce at full volume, and the first of her recitals, 'Airs d'opéras', in mono, for EMI in 1958, conveys the beauty of her singing but little of its power. Pierre Dervaux's famous performance of *Dialogues des Carmélites*, again in mono and released the same year, was the first recording to successfully capture the splendour of her voice, but it was only, perhaps, with her 1961 Wagner recital, again for EMI but now in stereo, that the subtlety of her singing and her remarkable way with dynamics over a vast range could be fully appreciated, above all in a performance of the *Wesendonck-Lieder* that still ranks among the finest on disc.

She also recorded at a time when there were elements of conservatism in regard to choice of repertory. Despite her pre-eminence in Berlioz, EMI was unwilling to let her tackle *Les Troyens* complete, opting instead for a 1965 two-disc set of 'great scenes', in which she plays both Cassandre and Didon, the former

uncharacteristically detached, the latter wonderfully restrained and noble. Her Tosca, strikingly vulnerable and anything but a conventional fire-breather, was recorded in French in 1960, meanwhile, and consequently never received the wide circulation it deserved.

The programming for her recitals, too, could, on occasion, be relatively conventional, though her singing was always magnificent. In 'Italian Operatic Arias', for Decca in 1963, she gives Desdemona real dignity and turns Santuzza into a figure of unusually tragic eloquence. The more uneven 'Verdi Arias', for EMI in 1965, finds her battling Georges Prêtre's slowish speeds in Lady Macbeth's Sleepwalking scene, though she really impresses as both Elisabetta and Eboli in *Don Carlo*. 'Régine Crespin chante l'opéra français', from 1961 and her sole album for Vega, is a real stunner, however. The programme ranges adventurously over both the relatively familiar (Charlotte's Letter scene from *Werther*) and the little known. 'Ô ma lyre immortelle' from Gounod's *Sapho* is tremendous in its control and pathos, and she's simply staggering in 'Salut, splendeur du jour' from Reyer's *Sigurd*.

Crespin also maintained that she preferred song recitals to operatic roles, and two albums allow us to hear her in mixed programmes of Lieder and mélodies. A brooding, introverted performance of Schumann's Op 39 *Liederkreis* and some exquisite Fauré form the basis of the first, for EMI in 1966. A year later for Decca, there was more Schumann – *Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart*, very intense – together with Wolf, Debussy's *Chansons de Bilitis* (sexy, if a bit mature-sounding) and a Poulenc group, in which her wit is fierce and her way with French matchless.

The same humour and verbal dexterity also characterised her later recordings of Offenbach. Her sweet-natured Périchole contrasts with Métella's brazen knowingness in *La vie parisienne*: both performances date from 1976 and are conducted by Alain Lombard. One admires the cool self-assurance of her 1974 Carmen, again with Lombard, though the real treat among the operatic highlights included here is her Salomé in Prêtre's 1963 recording of Massenet's *Hérodiade*: mystic eroticism has rarely been more ecstatically or provocatively voiced. The 'private' cabaret songs, receiving their first release, meanwhile, are deliciously camp and simply priceless. **G**

which she also gamely delivers the opening mini-melodrama.

As before, there's a sense of the recital format not showing us all of what this outstanding singer can offer. And do I detect some of the varnish rubbing off on some of her top notes? The orchestral playing is not always of the highest quality but there's decent support from, among others, the elegant tenor Piero Pretti. Another impressive if not wholly satisfying release, then, but one that leaves one impatient to hear more.

Hugo Shirley

'Duets'

Bizet Carmen – Je suis Escamillo. Les pêcheurs de perles – C'était le soir ... Au fond du temple saint **Boito** Mefistofele – Son lo spirito che nega; Strano figlio del caos **Donizetti** Don Pasquale – La vostra ostinazione ... Prender moglie? L'elisir d'amore – Ardir! Ha forse il cielo; Voglio dire **Gounod** Faust – Mais ce Dieu, que peut-il pour moi?; Me voici! D'où vient ta surprise **Hermann** Ochi chernye **Lara** Granada **Verdi** Simon Boccanegra – Propizio ei giungel; Vieni a me, te benedico

Rolando Villazón ten **Ildar Abdrazakov** bass

Montreal Metropolitan Opera /

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

DG © 479 6901GH (61' • DDD)

Includes texts and translations



The press notes that came with this disc invoke celebrated duo

recitals of the past, but the combination of tenor and bass is not often to be found among them. That means Rolando Villazón and Ildar Abdrazakov are venturing into somewhat more unusual territory, at least once they are past their opening track, the evergreen duet from *Les pêcheurs de perles*.

Putting the programme together must have been a case of sharing out the spoils, one for you, then one for me. Villazón's choices focus on two operas by Donizetti he knows well both as singer and director, *L'elisir d'amore* and *Don Pasquale* (he directed *Don Pasquale* last year in Düsseldorf). Although his voice seems to have less body than it did, he remains charming in Nemorino's Act 1 meeting with Dulcamara and spins a shapely line through Ernesto's Act 1 run-in with Don Pasquale. The *bel canto* comic patter of the two *buffo* roles is not Abdrazakov's forte (nothing beats a native Italian in these) but he does well enough in support.

A return trip to the Underworld is Abdrazakov's choice, featuring a double encounter between Faust and Mephistopheles as imagined first by Boito, then by Gounod. Neither of these extracts quite comes to life, mainly because Abdrazakov is short on the charisma they require, missing most of Mephistopheles's satanic relish (do not even think about making comparisons with Boris Christoff). Villazón finds little to engage him in the Boito but is vivid in the Gounod. It is one of the attractive features of this disc that each duet is set in context with the scene-setting that precedes it.

The rest of the recital includes a dull meeting between Gabriele Adorno and Fiesco from *Simon Boccanegra* and a high-energy punch-up between Don José and Escamillo in *Carmen*, where much of the excitement comes from the scintillating playing Yannick Nézet-Séguin gets from the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal. As a double encore, the singers join forces for a pair of songs from each other's homelands, 'Granada' from Mexico and 'Dark Eyes' from Russia. Both go with infectious panache and I have to say I enjoyed them rather more than the rest of the disc. **Richard Fairman**

'Un opéra pour trois rois'

Operatic excerpts by **Bury, Colin de Blamont,**

Dauvergne, Destouches, Francoeur Gluck, Lalande, Leclair, Lully, Mondonville, Philidor, Piccinni, Rameau, Rebel and Royer

Chantal Santon-Jeffery sop..... La Renommée

Emőke Baráth sop..... La Gloire

Thomas Dolié bar..... Apollon

Purcell Choir; Orfeo Orchestra / György Vashegyi

Glossa © (2) GCD924002 (92' • DDD)

Includes texts and translations



This imaginary *fête musicale* is assembled from assorted works

associated with the French court during the reigns of Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI – not just entertainments put on at Versailles, but also whenever the court was residing at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Fontainebleau and so on. Three soloists sing the allegorical roles Renown (or Fame), Glory and Apollo in this 'Opera for Three Kings' – no doubt devotees of neglected French operas of the *Ancien Régime* will experience an illuminating epiphany.

Conducted expertly by György Vashegyi, the Budapest-based Purcell

Choir and Orfeo Orchestra produce characterful panache, heroic swagger, balletic deftness and suave charm as each selection requires. Within the first few minutes there is a whistle-stop tour through the Overture from Lully's *Les plaisirs de l'île enchantée* (1664), an idyllic chorus from Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1733), a valorous duet from Destouches's *Issé* (1697) and a turbulent ritournelle from Mondonville's *Les fêtes de Paphos* (1758). The Turkish march from Lully's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) serves as a *deus ex machina* in which Apollo descends from a cloud; the ensuing scene is a clever patchwork of stormy music including an effervescent Orage from Rameau's *Platée* (1745), an agitated chorus from Colin de Blamont's ballet *Zéphyre et Flore* (1737), the florid aria 'Vents furieux, tristes tempêtes' from Rameau's *La princesse de Navarre* (1745) – sung brilliantly by Chantal Santon-Jeffery – and a spectacular set-piece from Dauvergne's *Le retour du printemps* (1765). The storms resolve into sublime catharsis with the delicate pizzicato and sweet melodicism of pastoral love music from Leclair's *Scylla et Glaucus* (1746), sung gorgeously by Emőke Baráth, and the first act concludes with a chaconne from Royer's ballet *Le pouvoir de l'Amour* (1743) that alternates between swaying woodwind-laden intimacy and regal trumpet-festooned splendour before evolving into a paean to Bacchus (led boldly by baritone Thomas Dolié).

The makeshift libretto's narrative is occasionally tenuous but it is fascinating to hear the celebrated funeral scene from Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* given in an expanded orchestration performed at Versailles in 1770 (the texture of 'Tristes apprêts, pâles flambeaux' thickened by extra woodwind colourations arguably cramps the space occupied by Baráth's heartfelt singing). Another famous set piece is the lament 'Ô malheureuse Iphigénie' from Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* (judged exquisitely on all fronts), but it is the rarest music that makes this pastiche invaluable: a hymn to liberty from Mondonville's *Le carnaval du Parnasse* (1749) is sung blithely by Santon-Jeffery, and a beautifully solemn chorus from Piccinni's *Atys* (1780) hints at why some partisan Parisians preferred his operas to Gluck's. **David Vickers**

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Books



Geraint Lewis reads a biography of Ursula Vaughan Williams:

'Ursula's story will increasingly be seen as crucial to a fuller understanding of some of the greatest music ever written by a British composer'



Mike Ashman on a flawed profile of Mathilde Wesendonck:

'The central thesis is that, while remaining literally faithful to her husband, Mathilde always carried Wagner in her heart'

Mistress and Muse

Ursula – The Second Mrs Vaughan Williams

By Janet Tennant

Albion Music Limited, PB, 394pp, £30.00

ISBN 978-0-995-62840-3



The redoubtable Frances de la Tour had a brave stab at playing Ursula Vaughan Williams in Alan Bennett's

recent film *The Lady in the Van*, though as Ursula's niece Frances Rhodes observes pithily here, 'Ursula would *never* have worn flat shoes!' Indeed not, and her deportment would have been far less casual, her clothes much more stylish and her voice infinitely more refined. But one can sympathise with de la Tour: in this day and age, an accurate portrayal of Ursula would probably strike most viewers as impossibly remote and 'far-back' – yet therein lay so much of her sharp charm and natural magic.

The intimate details of Ursula's hitherto undocumented early relationship with Ralph Vaughan Williams – from 1938 until the death of his first wife Adeline in 1951 – were summarised in Keith Alldritt's 2015 biography of RVW. Since he is Janet Tennant's partner, her generosity in allowing him the scoop is perfectly understandable – but the genuine need for this complementary first biography of Ursula is still valid. Many valuable details are filled in, especially in relation to the early life. Ursula's background as naval granddaughter, army-and-navy daughter and (almost inevitably) an army wife, with no fixed sense of 'home', explains much of her peripatetic education and initially solitary mindset. But it is important to note that her determination to be a published poet far pre-dated her chance encounter with RVW on March 31, 1938 – and remained central to her personal and creative identity throughout their relationship and right to the end of her long and ultimately fulfilled life.

So, even if Alldritt rather stole Tennant's thunder in revealing that Ursula and Ralph became lovers almost immediately in 1938, it is nevertheless ample testimony to Tennant's careful research and diary-reading that she can piece together the jigsaw of a story that will increasingly be seen as crucial to a fuller understanding of some of the greatest music ever written by a British composer. Right from the serenely ecstatic warmth of the opening invocation to the *Serenade to Music* (written in that radiant spring of 1938) it is obvious that 'something had happened' to RVW and that a distinctive new voice emerges within the fabric of his inherent musical language, going on immediately to enrich the emerging Fifth Symphony.

Tennant's narrative, however, is plodding in pace and involves an awful lot of unconsidered repetition and clunking references to the historical backdrop of the times – sadly not always accurate. Was Britain at war on 28 July 1914 as suggested here? Later on we find Clement Attlee 'implementing the plans in the *Beverage Report*' (her italics). And did Vaughan Williams compose four symphonies in Dorking between 1929 and 1938? Such howlers are plentiful and suggest, as was also true of Alldritt's turgid tome, that to avoid the employment of a professional editor is a terrible and counterproductive mistake. If reprinted, this book should be properly and meticulously edited: its subject deserves no less.

Nevertheless, the story at the heart of the book rings true – even if Tennant has inevitably to spend much of her time speculating about the most interesting and tantalising details. This is partly because Ursula was heroically discreet about RVW and his close family throughout her life – and so, in keeping with that spirit, it is oddly appropriate that we still have to read between the lines and glean what we can. The very way in which she managed to dovetail herself into the married life of a devoted couple who'd just celebrated their ruby wedding is itself a thing of

wonder, as is her seamless transition to Mrs RVW early in 1953. This, I suspect, was reward enough for all she'd been through previously; but a posthumous degree of retrospective understanding by those who love the music would have been 'the icing on RVW's cake' – as she once typically described herself – and on hers.

What, then, of the long widowhood from August 26, 1958, to October 23, 2007? Discretion again – and why not? Ursula became the veritable Queen Mother of British Music and behaved impeccably with generosity and compassion to many individuals and causes. And what about the second-hand reporting here of a seemingly bonkers proposal of marriage by letter from Michael Tippett around 1959? She'd been wife and widow twice already as well as muse and mistress – and that was quite enough to be going on with: she was now more than deservedly her own woman, so she didn't bother with a reply. **Geraint Lewis**

Mathilde Wesendonck: Isolde's Dream

By Judith Cabaud

Amadeus Press, HB, 256pp, £22.00

ISBN 978-1-574-67491-0



The chauvinistic world of Wagner research has been interested largely in two questions about this lady:

(a) was she the composer's lover as well as his patron and muse, and (b) was she anything more than a brainless rich groupie who deluded herself she could collaborate with men of genius? In addition, few books that touched on the subject dealt with more than the seven years (1852-58) of Mathilde's closest acquaintance with Wagner in Zurich, adding a few comments on how the latter's second wife Cosima effectively sealed off any follow-up encounters between the pair and destroyed much of their correspondence.



The icing on RVW's cake: Ursula Vaughan Williams with second husband Ralph

Today we are better off for coherently researched and written information about the whole Wagner/Wesendonck 'affair'. See, for example, Chris Walton's *Richard Wagner's Zurich: The Muse of Place* (Camden House, 1/08), which concludes, quite radically, that Mathilde 'became an important sounding-board for Wagner's plans and theories'. So much for the 'white (or blank) piece of paper' that we have been given as her character reference for so long. But Walton, inevitably, did not have space or remit for a fully annotated, blow-by-blow account of the Wagner/Mathilde relationship using the extant correspondence and the writings of both parties, and exactly how that continued to affect Mathilde's life.

It is this that Cabaud attempts in this book, a translation – presumably by the author herself, though we're not told – of a French original that first appeared in 1992. In a preface she compares her piecing together of 'the unknown puzzle' of Mathilde to 'the elements of a life experience that seemed to have been invented by some romantic author'. But regrettably (in addition to the fact that publisher and author are a quarter of a century behind in taking the book into English) that is almost entirely what she has created here through her decision to combine biography and novel.

Cabaud's central thesis is that, while remaining literally faithful to her

husband and family, Mathilde always carried Wagner in her mind and heart. But there are many irrelevancies. Already in a Prologue the reader has to wade through the first of innumerable sub-Mills and Boon pathetic fallacy weather/mood descriptions: 'That day, at the beginning of summer, after a refreshing rainfall, the scent of the trees in bloom on Unter den Linden and the mild drowsiness of late afternoon hanging over the city had cast an irresistible torpor on its inhabitants.' That seems wasted space in a serious book, and how does Cabaud know about the Berlin weather that day and its effect on the city's population? It is incredible also that, while this section centres on the visit of two French Wagnerites to the 73-year-old Mathilde, its potentially important quotations ('Wagner put me rapidly aside ... and yet I am Isolde') are left devoid of source reference.

The clumsy English of 'Wagner put me rapidly aside' is typical of the text of a book which often smacks more of Google translate than freshly applied work. At least in the main body of the story many (but not all) quotations are sourced, though some unhelpfully to the French editions of reference books which were Cabaud's first port of call.

The book progresses slowly because of many diversions but gathers pace when Wagner – now in the 'Asyl' next to the Wesendoncks' Zurich villa – starts working

on *Tristan* and receives from Mathilde the poems that he would set as the *Wesendonck-Lieder*. But here Cabaud becomes even more novelistic and would-be psychiatric analyst, mirroring every feeling and emotion of Wagner and Mathilde with stage events in *Die Walküre* and *Tristan*. When Minna Wagner intercepted what she took to be a 'confession' of love from her husband for Mathilde, Cabaud tells us that 'Minna Wagner was only an incident that revealed Mathilde's soul ... the instrument by which Mathilde finally realised what all this rarefied love looked like from the outside. Gossip suddenly rang deafeningly in her ears. Mathilde-Isolde was suddenly confronted with Mathilde-Brangäne ... the speech of Melot to King Marke had just broken

forever the ecstatic duo in the second act between Tristan and Isolde.'

Cabaud also compares Wagner's acceptance that he would have to give up Mathilde with the final scene of *Die Walküre*: 'The proof that it was Brünnhilde-Mathilde whom Wotan-Richard was renouncing is heard in the music at the peak of Wotan's "Lebwohl".' And she describes the arrival of Cosima von Bülow in Mathilde's house in Zurich as the moment when the three Norns (Minna, Mathilde, Cosima) finally came together. We're still firmly in the realms of the romantic novel.

There is less intrusive psychology later on – but still plenty of emotional commentary on the weather. Cabaud fills in the rest of Mathilde's story: her poetry and plays (including an *Alkestis* and an *Edith*; her attempt to woo Brahms into a collaboration on an opera about William the Conqueror's rival Harold Godwinson); her hosting of a Clara Schumann concert and other musical and literary soirées; her rather sad and isolated visits to the early Bayreuth Festival; interesting conversations with early Wagner biographer Mary Burrell. There is much information here not easy to gather elsewhere under one roof but – for this reader at least – form defeats content, editing and translating are sloppy and a golden opportunity is lost.

Mike Ashman

The Editors of Gramophone's sister music magazines, Jazzwise and Songlines, recommend some of their favourite recordings from the past month

Jazz

Brought to you by **jazzwise**

Elliot Galvin Trio

The Influencing Machine

Edition © EDN1103



Elliot Galvin is the most conceptual and intellectual of the Chaos Collective, the former student friends whose most public

platform is Laura Jurd's Dinosaur. This third solo album was inspired by 18th century double-agent and paranoid schizophrenic James Tilly-Matthews, and his intricate, prescient delusions. 'Monster Mind', with its smashed hi-hat, and piano which alternates between nervous investigatory creeps and confident sallying forth, most obviously describes a divided soul, falling at last into a misty dreamtime. The pensive, mostly solo piano of 'Society' seems a pre-emptive elegy before some looming apocalypse, its American classical

and blues touches suggesting the American Civil War. 'Bees Dogs and Flies' then borrows a Renaissance folk tune, rooting it in common soil absent elsewhere, and ending in another inconsolable refrain. This is jazz in its open mind, and post-modern in mode of thought. **Nick Hasted**

Brian Blade and the Fellowship Band

Body and Shadow

Blue Note © 00602557921717



The superlative drummer Brian Blade's Fellowship Band has retained the nucleus of the line-up that recorded the eponymous debut release in 1998. This is the band's fifth recording, and it ups the dosage of the kind of blissfully mellow acoustic Americana explored on previous 2014 album *Landmarks*

with folk, alt rock/country and gospel roots forming the spine of *Body and Shadow*. All are originals save for two renditions of the spiritual 'Have Thine Own Way Lord', one that features Jon Cowherd solo on harmonium and the other, a full band version. In that sense it shares common ground with the drummer's work with Norah Jones, Joni Mitchell and the quietly influential saxophonist-composer David Binney rather than the progressive improv of Wayne Shorter's quartet, or his more traditionally jazz-centred role with Josh Redman or Kenny Garrett. Only on Cowherd's gospel-y 'Duality', and the poppy jazz Metheny-esque 'Broken Leg Days', does the band open up to any lengthy improv. *Body and Shadow* though feels like a cohesive album rather than a set of individual tracks, and the high quality musicianship only adds to the warm depths of the collective dialogue. **Selwyn Harris**

World Music

Brought to you by **SONGLINES**

Kapela Maliszów

Wiejski Dżez

Unzipped Fly Records © UFC012



The Malisz family hail from Męcina Mała, a small village in the foothills of the Carpathian mountains near the Slovakian border.

The patriarch, Jan, builds violins, hurdy-gurdys, nyckelharps, pipes and more in his workshop, plays cello, hurdy-gurdy and accordion, and his children Zuzanna and Kacper play the baraban (drum) and fiddle respectively – both instruments having been in the Malisz family for generations. Kacper's furiously emotional mastery of the fiddle is wondrous throughout, and both Jan's accordion and Zuzanna's voice excel. *Wiejski Dżez* (Village Jazz) is a music rooted in vanishing traditions, reconnecting the here-and-now with the going, going, gone.

It's the fire of their improvisations that makes this music of tradition as relevant and contemporary as a broadband connection. *Wiejski Dżez* is their response against the sprawl of mass culture over smaller, local cultures. By reaching into the past with the vitality of the present, the Malisz family deliver another powerful and rich set. **Tim Cumming**

Boubacar Traoré

Dounia Tabolo

Lusafrica © 762502



Now in his mid-70s, Traoré was allegedly playing African blues guitar even before the late, great Ali Farka Touré. His African recordings speak volumes about the centuries-old musical trade routes between West Africa and black

America but *Dounia Tabolo* represents the first time he has travelled to the US to record. The result is an album that ranks alongside Ali Farka Touré and Ry Cooder's *Talking Timbuktu* as a living, vital connection between Mali and the Mississippi Delta. Recorded in a studio deep in Louisiana, the album features American acoustic bluesman Corey Harris duetting on guitar, while Cedric Watson coaxes from his violin a plaintive sound like the West African one-string njarka and the estimable Leyla McCalla, once of Carolina Chocolate Drops, contributes some gloriously resonant cello licks, heard most tellingly on 'Yafa Ma'. Traoré sings in a deep baritone in Bamana and French but the tunes seem to transcend language barriers. Magnificent as Traoré's African recordings are, Traoré's blues have never sounded deeper and more profound than they do here. **Nigel Williamson**

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MUSICAL CONNECTIONS

James Jolly takes us on two listening journeys inspired by two of this month's features

Idiosyncratic violinists

If you've ever seen **Patricia Kopatchinskaja** play, you'll know that it's a full-on experience, no compromise, no prisoners taken. She belongs to that small band of players who do more than play the notes; there's a real sense that the music is somehow being played for the first time and, when it works, it's an overwhelming experience. Her *Gramophone* Recording of the Year from 2013, concertos by Bartók, Ligeti and Eötvös, still mesmerises for its sheer force of personality combined with a genuinely warm embrace of the music. From a generation before her you'd have to go to the music-making of **Nigel Kennedy** for a similar approach: long before the persona began to dominate, there was a period when he tackled the core works of the violin repertoire and really made them his own – his recording of Brahms's Violin Concerto impresses with its clarity of vision but also its still-fresh engagement with the music. For me, **Gidon Kremer** also fits into this 'school' of musicianship – he was never content to plough and re-plough familiar furrows. He did things his way and even in works as seemingly 'pure' as the Mozart violin concertos he would find something startling new to say, and when teamed up with a comparably inquisitive conductor like Nikolaus Harnoncourt, something extraordinary would happen. Another player whose way with core works, like the Beethoven concerto, makes one listen afresh is the violinist (and conductor) **Thomas Zehetmair**. Joining the Orchestra of the 18th Century and Frans Brüggen, he brings to the work an integrity and vision that really impresses. It's a modern classic and if you don't know it, do listen. A great player from the last century who also had the ability to make one listen as if for the first time is **Isaac Stern**. His career brought him into contact with some remarkable musicians and he left a huge and mightily impressive catalogue of recordings. His recording of the Wieniawski Second with Eugene Ormandy is magnificent. One of the true musical tragedies of the 20th century was the death at 30 of the French player **Ginette Neveu** who, few would disagree, was on course to become one of the greatest violinists of her time. She could create an intensity and power that was like a laser beam. To hear her play the Sibelius concerto with Walter Susskind and the Philharmonia is overwhelming.

Bartók. Ligeti. Eötvös. Violin Concerto Kopatchinskaja; Frankfurt RSO, Ens Modern / Eötvös **Naïve**

Brahms Violin Concerto Kennedy; LPO / Tennstedt Warner Classics

Mozart Violin Concertos Kremer; VPO / Harnoncourt DG

Beethoven Violin Concerto Zehetmair; Orch of 18th C / Brüggen **Philips/Decca**

Wieniawski Stern; Phil / Ormandy **Sony Classical**

Sibelius Neveu; Philh / Susskind **Warner Classics**

Gerald Moore with the baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, one of the greatest performing and recording partnerships of modern times



A musical partnership of true equals

The mastery of Moore

As Graham Johnson so beautifully argues in his Icons article (page 52), Gerald Moore was the doyen of accompanists (a status consolidated in our February 2006 issue when a group of leading song-pianists selected him and Benjamin Britten as the 'accompanist's accompanists'). 'There is no more of that pale shadow at the keyboard; he is always an equal with his partner' the baritone **Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau** wrote, and few collaborations left greater riches than that with Fischer-Dieskau which lasted for over two decades. Selecting a single example of their work together (which included all of Schubert's songs) is hard but I've always cherished their *Winterreise* from 1955, a milestone in the singer's long journey with the cycle but a fascinating comparison with the recording Moore made with **Hans Hotter**

less than a year earlier, another remarkable approach and a terrifically powerful one. The two singers, one near the start of his career, the other mid-way through his, are strikingly different and Moore, too, responds to their unique visions of the piece accordingly. For insight allied to exquisite execution, the version with Hotter strikes me as the finer of the two (but only by a hair's breadth). It's easy to forget Moore's work with instrumentalists and the four 78s he recorded with the violinist **Josef Hassid** are gems indeed; Hassid died at 22, a phenomenal player who prompted Fritz Kreisler to say 'A fiddler such as Heifetz is born every 100 years; one like Hassid every 200 years'. It's playing that takes the breath away and Moore is an exemplary partner. Listen to Elgar's *La Capricieuse* and be prepared to be astounded. And just as Moore gave support to the young Hassid so did he for the young **Jacqueline du Pré** early in her cruelly curtailed career. Together cellist and pianist recorded a disc of short pieces, but the work (originally recorded for a Moore 70th birthday album) that *really* enchants is Fauré's *Elégie* – perfection! Back to song, and for a reminder of how beautifully Moore assimilated different national styles, listen (through slightly 'fizzy' sound) to Falla's *Seven Spanish Popular Songs* with **Nan Merriman** from 1955 (or indeed any of his Spanish collaborations with Victoria de los Angeles). And a personal favourite to end: Schumann's *Dichterliebe* with the Danish tenor **Aksel Schiøtz**, another artist with a short career, recorded in 1945. Heavenly singing, peerless piano playing.

Schubert Winterreise Fischer-Dieskau; Moore Warner Classics

Schubert Winterreise Hotter; Moore Warner Classics

Elgar La Capricieuse Hassid; Moore **Digital Gramophone**

Fauré Elégie du Pré; Moore **Warner Classics**

Falla Canciones Populares Españolas Merriman; Moore BnF Collection

Schumann Dichterliebe Schiøtz; Moore BnF Collection



To explore these playlists via a streaming service, or to create your own, we suggest qobuz.com. You can listen to these particular playlists at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

The estimable art of Walter Giesecking

The brilliance of the great pianist laid bare in Mozart, Bach, Debussy, Beethoven, Franck and more

Few pianists in the 20th century courted as much controversy as did **Walter Giesecking**. The most obvious prompt was his decision to remain active in Germany during the Nazi era. In fact, Arthur Rubinstein once revealed Giesecking's confession: 'I am a committed Nazi. Hitler is saving our country.' That said, it was Giesecking who after the war taught the Jewish pianist Marian Filar for five years without payment. Recent releases featuring the pianist's considerable if inconsistent genius have included a remarkably agile and virtuosic live 1955 performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto No 21, K467 – the first-movement cadenza (at around 11'24", after a massive *rallentando* from Guido Cantelli and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra) is both wild and bizarre, the *Andante* dreamily romantic. It's part of a well-recorded, all-NYPSO/Cantelli two-disc set on Pristine Audio which also includes a fine performance of Beethoven's Third Concerto with Rudolf Firkušný and purely orchestral works by Haydn, Ravel, Falla, Vivaldi, Piston and Copland. This was Giesecking's second appearance with the NYPSO since 1939, his first attempted post-war American tour (1949) having been blocked by a storm of political protest, though a subsequent Carnegie Hall recital (1953) was very warmly received.

More Giesecking Mozart arrives courtesy of APR and the invaluable **'Walter Giesecking: His First Concerto Recordings'**, principally a chipper, poised and beautifully articulated premiere recording (1936) of Mozart's first great piano concerto, No 9 in E flat, K271 (*Jeune homme*), where Giesecking enjoys alert support from the Berlin State Opera Orchestra under Hans Rosbaud: everyone here obviously is on an equal musical footing. Rosbaud's mellow voicing at the start of the great *Andantino* spells gravitas in every bar, whereas Giesecking's nimble, almost skittish, handling of the finale's opening is brilliant in the extreme. The B flat Piano Sonata, K570 (1936) is another winner.



Giesecking's first movement cadenza in Mozart's Piano Concerto No 21 is 'wild and bizarre'

Three Beethoven concertos are also included: the Fourth, recorded in Berlin (1939) under Karl Böhm with the Staatskapelle Dresden, a swift and serenely classical conception; the *Emperor* with the Vienna Philharmonic under Bruno Walter (1934) exceptional by any standards, expressively phrased and very characterfully conducted. Perhaps my favourite of the three, another collaboration with Rosbaud (1937 this time), is the First, which is virtuosic in the opening movement and not too fast in the finale. Panning back to 1932, sessions with the LPO under Sir Henry Wood bring fire aplenty to Liszt's First Concerto and Franck's *Symphonic Variations*, with dazzling fingerwork (always a Giesecking speciality) and a winning lightness of touch. For Grieg's Concerto, Rosbaud again takes to the rostrum and offers Giesecking sterling support for a performance that, while big on grandeur and virtuosity, frequently reveals a delicate touch.

This last attribute is frequently in evidence on **'Debussy: The Complete Piano Works'**, Giesecking's legendary set of Debussy's solo piano music, recorded 1951-55 and remastered in 2011. Warner's

latest repackaging provides handy, space-saving access to performances that to this day provide credible benchmarks (has there ever been a more entrancing *Clair de lune*?) while illuminating lesser-known corners of the repertoire such as the *Douze Études*, where Giesecking is a dab hand at exploring and projecting the distinct harmonic architecture of each piece.

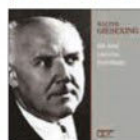
Returning to APR's package for a moment, there are short, sensitively played solo fill-ups of music by Grieg (two *Lyric Pieces*) and Bach (the closing two movements from the First Partita, BWV825). The Bach is replicated on **'Walter Giesecking: Complete Bach Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon'**, a fascinating, very well-annotated set featuring (among other works) all six Partitas and the French Overture, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the two- and three-part Inventions, the *Italian Concerto* and the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*, plus a bonus famous wartime recording of the Schumann Concerto under Furtwängler. The Bach recordings were recorded at Radio Saarbrücken between January and June 1950, the performances often sporting a pre-Gouldian sprightliness, intensity

and sparseness of texture, though there are times in the '48' when Gieseeking affects a subtle but noticeable acceleration as he gets into a piece (for instance in Prelude No 10 in E minor, Book 2, disc 4, track 14 – beam up 0'47" then flip back to the beginning and you'll note the difference). The two Partita movements are marginally more pointed than on the earlier versions, while the *Chromatic Fantasia* suggests, in its grand sonority, textural backup from Busoni (though I don't think there is any). The French Overture has a compelling sense of period about it, the closing 'Echo' displaying lightning dynamic reflexes. Individualistic, brilliant, occasionally fallible (in the C minor Toccata), deeply human and fitfully brusque, Gieseeking's Bach repays repeated hearings.

RECORDINGS



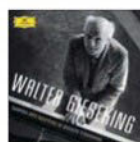
Cantelli: New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, Vol 1
Pristine Audio (M) (2) PASC 501



Walter Gieseeking: His First Concerto Recordings
APR mono (S) (3) APR7308



Debussy: The Complete Piano Works
Warner Classics (S) (5) 9029 58691-9



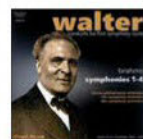
Walter Gieseeking: Complete Bach Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon
DG (S) (7) 479 7362

Walter's earliest Brahms

I described an Opus Kura release of Bruno Walter's musically responsive 1930s recordings of Brahms's First and Third Symphonies with the VPO as being 'like listening to decent copies of the original 78s on a first-rate playback system' (A/17). Now Pristine Audio has reissued the same recordings as part of **'Walter Conducts His First Symphony Cycle'**, adding a rare 1940 NBC SO recording of the Second Symphony and the more familiar 1934 BBC SO account of the Fourth, memorable principally because of the great breadth that Walter and his London players bring to the return of the second idea in the *Andante*, though I found the wide vicissitudes of tempo in the finale distracting. Comparing the transfers of Nos 1 and 3, Opus Kura's marginally more

natural version liberates a fuller curve of dynamics, greater warmth too, but bearing in mind the cost of importing the Japanese CD even its (very) subtle superiority is perhaps offset by Pristine's bargain price point. The Second Symphony faces stiff competition from various Walter alternatives including Pristine's excellent transfer of a 1951 broadcast with the New York Philharmonic (PASC124). The slow movement has a more searching quality on the later version. Still, the NBC recording has the advantage of a keenly driven finale, which, in its closing pages, is even more deliciously joyful than Toscanini's versions with the same orchestra.

RECORDING



Walter Conducts His First Symphony Cycle: Brahms
Pristine Audio (M) (2) PASC 512

Van Beinum Baroque

In January 1929 at Carnegie Hall the Amsterdam Concertgebouw's reigning maestro Willem Mengelberg made a two-disc 78rpm shellac recording of JC Bach's Sinfonia in B flat, Op 18 No 2, with the 'Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York' as it was billed on the label (HMV D1988/89). The performance was light years ahead of its time in terms of its buoyant, dancing quality. Pan forwards almost 30 years and the Concertgebouw's subsequent rostrum chief **Eduard van Beinum** recorded the same work in Amsterdam, his performance similarly crisp and expressive, and with the Sinfonia in D, Op 18 No 4, for company. Both are captured in excellent stereo sound and both have reappeared as part of Decca Eloquence's van Beinum series. The remainder of this particular programme is in cleanly balanced mono and opens with a blazing account of Jeremiah Clarke's *Trumpet Voluntary* (in Sir Henry Wood's arrangement and already available on Eloquence's 'Concertgebouw Lollipops', 482 5650). Handel arranged by Sir Hamilton Harty completes the deal, the opening of *The Royal Fireworks Music* extremely broad, as is the succeeding *Alla siciliana*, though the mood brightens considerably for the Bourrée and a sense of ceremony returns for the closing Menuetto. In the *Water Music Suite* van Beinum directs the LPO, though he later went on to record the Chrysander version of the score with the Concertgebouw Orchestra for Philips (in stereo, currently available on Scribendum). This Harty

version is, as a performance, conceptually similar, being lively, elegant and poised where needs be.

RECORDING



Clarke, Handel/Harty, JC Bach
Concertgebouw Orch; LPO / van Beinum
Decca Eloquence (B) 482 5557

A peerless balladeer

If an English-speaking music lover asked me to nominate a first step in exploring the greatest among art song interpreters, my instinct would be to gravitate not to, say, Hotter, Bernac, or Chaliapin – superb as those artists are – but to John McCormack who on his finest recordings somehow managed to combine unforgettable singing with poetic declamation, where every word is crystal-clear and the voice itself underpins the words' meaning with a potent wealth of emotion and keen sense of narrative. Various 'McCormack editions' are either complete or still in the making but for starters Alto's **'Very Best of John McCormack's Irish Ballads'** will likely press all the right buttons plus some you didn't realise you had. Right from the first track, 'The Garden where the Praties Grow', charmingly genial yet the way McCormack spins the yarn holds you captive; 'The Star of the County Down' likewise gives the illusion that even after the passage of 78 years McCormack is singing for you and you only. But perhaps the most remarkable track dates from 1927, 'Kathleen Mavourneen', its sense of melodrama palpable, with sudden bursts of emotion (especially towards the end of the piece) that are quite overwhelming in their impact. The only art song recording I know of that affects me quite so much is Chaliapin in Massenet's 'Elégie'. Beam up 3'01" to the words 'Mavourneen, Mavourneen, my sad tears are falling ...' and follow on until to the end (there's only 1'15" left) and you're bound to be moved, the effect bordering on operatic. There are 24 ballads programmed, all well transferred, the dates of recording stretching from 1916 to 1941. A real treat, definitely not to be missed.

RECORDING



Very Best of John McCormack's Irish Ballads
Alto (S) ALN 1962

Classics RECONSIDERED



Richard Whitehouse and **Peter Quantrill** return to Boulez's landmark *Lulu* recording and assess its iconic status



Berg

Lulu (Act 3 orch completed Friedrich Cerha)
Soloists; Paris Opera Orchestra / Pierre Boulez
DG

We can be grateful this set is so well cast, and the Paris orchestra in such fine form for Boulez – discipline, tone-quality, nuance and firmly distinctive characterisation of each new section or mood, are all much to be appreciated here. So is the scrupulous balance of the recording, all the voices well forward, but not at the expense of orchestral detail, even if one might occasionally wish for subtler distancing of characters: the recorded

sound is close, somewhat dry, especially compared with Dohnányi on Decca. After the Paris premiere, my admiration chiefly went to Franz Mazura, for his tough and ruthless but not unfeeling Dr Schön, a magnificent assumption, and to Hanna Schwarz's unusually convincing Schoolboy and Page. The records increase enthusiasm for Miss Stratas's *Lulu*, softer and more feline than Anja Silja on Decca, not so starry but easier on the ear. Stratas, more than Silja, conveys Berg's deep compassion for *Lulu* who is not just a selfish bitch, but a victim of unscrupulous men. On record, Kenneth

Riegel's Alwa more fully commands respect as a dramatic and musical impersonation; the voice is attractive, the singing bold and cogent. Both of them, and several others in the cast, have less than faultless German pronunciation, which may disturb enjoyment of the spoken passages for those sensitive to such things. Toni Blankenheim is a splendid Schigolch who almost survives comparison with the *non-pariel* Hans Hotter on the Decca set. For sheer sensual enjoyment I shall go on listening to the Decca *Lulu*. For getting to know the whole opera, this DG set is at present indispensable. **William Mann (10/79)**

Richard Whitehouse This was an important recording for me. I can well remember the impact of the Paris Opera production when it was broadcast on BBC Two at Easter 1979, and the recording was an inevitable Christmas present later that year. It was warmly received, not least by William Mann in *Gramophone* – though this may have been because nobody dared criticise Cerha's realisation of Act 3. Later assessments were less positive: musicologist Dominique Jameux saw the production as symptomatic of Boulez's 'turning establishment' in his maturity. And, of course, the Cerha completion was later called into doubt, though maybe we can return to that?

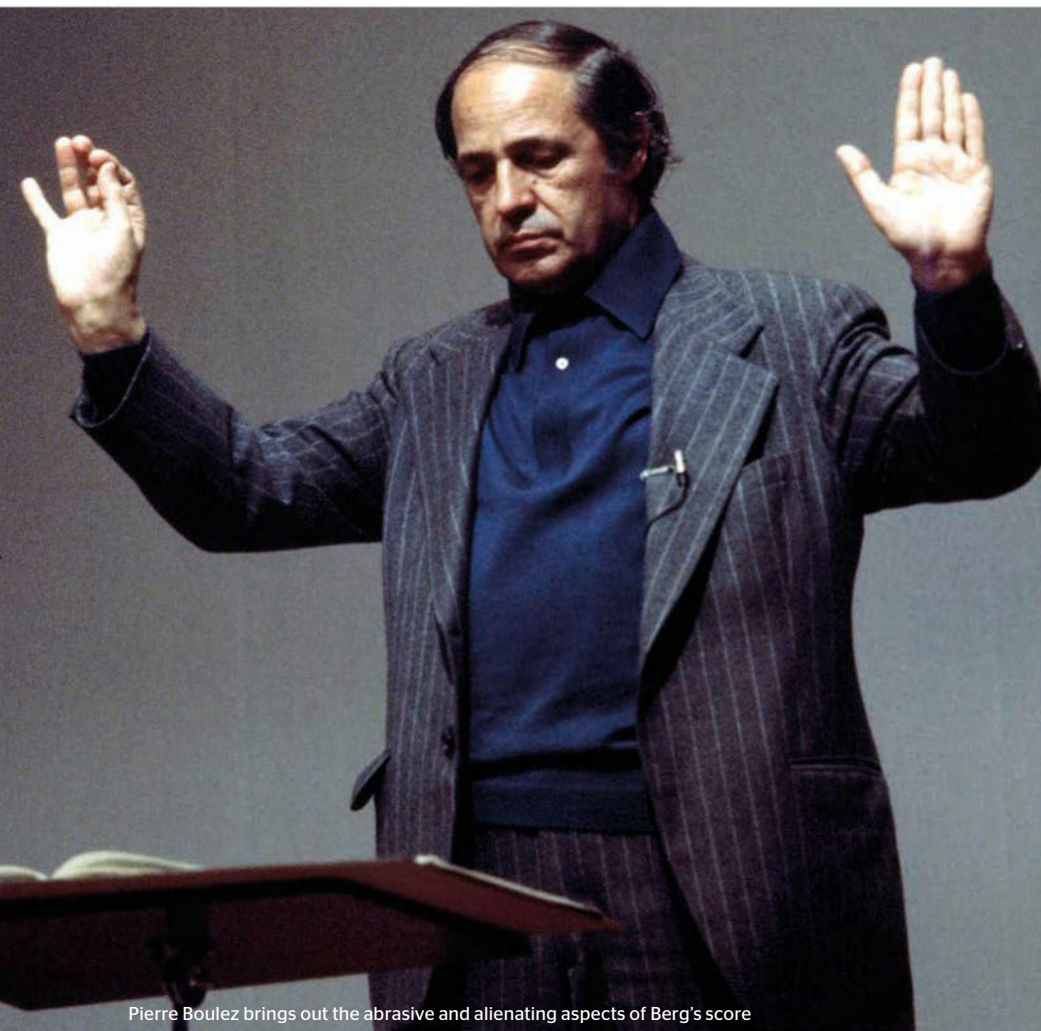
Peter Quantrill At the time of its premiere, there was some English grouching in the press (what's new?) about the updating of the action in Patrice Chéreau's production, in association with which this studio recording was made at IRCAM. What may have been overlooked is the degree to which, pivoting from *Wozzeck* to *Lulu*, Berg updated and relocated his music from the Vienna of Schoenberg and Kraus to the Weimar-era culture of Brecht and Pabst.

I think you can hear Boulez doing the same for the score – not only by playing it complete, with the libretto unaltered (omitting some spoken passages), but also by reclaiming it from the 'Vienna Philharmonic sound' (scuffed up a bit by Christoph von Dohnányi in his Decca account) that produced Mahler with wrong notes. What Boulez achieved with the Paris Opera orchestra was not dirtier or sleazier but more precise and heterogeneous: piano and sax parts played as foreign bodies rather than integrated within the orchestration. As for him selling out, I'll leave yesterday's battles to their soldiers!

RW I think Boulez did a real service to this opera, which had often (and by Berg luminaries such as Mosco Carner) been viewed as a reaction against the formal and conceptual audacity of *Wozzeck*. *Lulu* might be the more overly expressive score, but the orchestral writing is absolutely 'contemporary' in its abrasive and alienating aspects; something that Dohnányi (surprisingly, perhaps, given his prowess in post-war German opera) rather fights shy of.

PQ Modern listeners accustomed to the more impassioned approach of Andrew Davis at Glyndebourne or Kirill Petrenko in Munich may find a measured sobriety about the scenes between *Lulu* and Dr Schön. Conversely, Boulez brings unrivalled motivation to the most 'Berlin' scene of all, in the Casino that opens Act 3, where the important dialogue between *Lulu* and Geschwitz is (perhaps inevitably) indistinguishable from the melee in Cerha's completion.

RW That's true, but it's surely part and parcel of what this first scene of Act 3 is all about. I find rather dismaying the ways in which detractors have called this scene into question. Yes, it's less emotionally enfolding than those scenes either side, but should a scene centred upon 'gangster capitalism' and human degradation be otherwise? Also, the serial writing here is innovative even by the standards of this opera overall, and Cerha has realised its intricacies brilliantly. The notion that one could simply omit this scene, thereby segueing between the final scenes of Acts 2 and 3, makes a mockery of Berg's symmetrical formal scheme but



Pierre Boulez brings out the abrasive and alienating aspects of Berg's score

also robs those scenes of their emotional gravitas. Have you seen the Berlin staging by Andrea Breth with Daniel Barenboim conducting (and Mojca Erdmann admittedly impressive in the title-role)? Not only does this omit the first scene of Act 3, but also the resulting contractual fracas necessitated a new completion of the final scene which sounds like a pastiche of a Peer Raben score to a Fassbinder film. Travesty hardly begins to describe it.

PQ Cerha is the only game in town, isn't he? How about the singing? Teresa Stratas herself confessed that by the time of the first night she was out of voice, yet whatever studio trickery was involved (she's set notably further back from the microphones than Dr Schön and his son in the final scenes of the first two acts), she never sounds less than vibrant, and she's on top of the notes, in her own unattainable world of floated lyrical beauty. The Geschwitz of Yvonne Minton is still unsurpassed, I'd say. She returns a dignity to Wedekind's countess that's sometimes cruelly stripped away by Berg. I think her recital of Geschwitz's time in hospital is

the most moving passage of the recording. And it's refreshing to re-encounter the mingled unease and bravado of Kenneth Riegel's Alwa in the context of today's pale Berg lookalikes.

RW I agree absolutely about Minton's Geschwitz, who emerges as the opera's true heroine in terms of her selflessness and compassion. Not that Stratas disappoints, tackling the frequently unreasonable demands of Berg's vocal writing with unwavering conviction (though it's not surprising if, as I recall, she was already considering quitting the stage at this point). Nor would I argue about Riegel's Alwa – who, as you suggest, has a presence and immediacy, whatever passing vocal coarseness, that makes far more of this role than the put-upon wimp he's often portrayed as these days. My only real reservation concerns the Dr Schön of Franz Mazura, who's rather too bovine and gritty in tone to engage the listener's interest. Then again, there's a typically perceptive cameo from Robert Tear as the neurotic Painter, while Toni Blankenheim is mesmeric as the uncouth Schigolch –

a role often reserved nowadays for retired bass-baritones.

PQ Notions of masculinity have radically evolved in the 80 years since *Lulu* premiered – and (salutary to remember) this production stands almost at the halfway point. Collective perception of a male archetype such as Dr Schön must be affected too. Rupert Murdoch, De Niro's Jake LaMotta, Michael Douglas's Gordon Gekko: there's something of Dr Schön in all of them, and the impotent rage which makes him see red at the opening of Act 2, cuckolded by a lesbian, surely doesn't respond to suave Lieder-legato, even if modern counterparts such as Bo Skovhus have made out otherwise. Mazura was Gunther at Bayreuth for Boulez and Chéreau: I'd call it sound casting! He's still vocally younger than and nicely distinguished from the Schigolch of Blankenheim.

RW More than 17 years ago (!), I remarked of the DG Originals remastering (8/00) that 'this remains the version of *Lulu* to have'.

PQ Considering the audio-only versions, I'd broadly agree. That said, given the plethora of filmed productions available, CD is more and more of a niche choice, wouldn't you say? *Lulu* and Lulu really do want to be seen.

RW It's hard to believe now that when the Boulez recording first appeared there was just the 1976 Dohnányi and the Karl Böhm set of a decade earlier obtainable in the UK. Sure, there are several comparable DVDs. I'd certainly go for the Glyndebourne production with Christine Schäfer in the title-role; also the Salzburg one with Patricia Petibon – but not the Monnaie staging with its ersatz chic and Barbara Hannigan's technically immaculate but emotionally uninvolved Lulu. For me, the best production of an opera I love is the one I'm seeing in my head while listening to the music. And I for one wouldn't want to be without Boulez. Whatever its shortcomings, it conveys the extent of what, for me, is one of the half-dozen greatest operas from the 20th century.

PQ Chéreau, Stratas and Boulez bequeathed to us a generation of coloratura actresses (foremost among them Petibon, Marlis Petersen – and, for me, Hannigan) who wanted to invest themselves body and soul in the part – and no less valuably they prompted renewed interest in *Erdgeist* and *Die Büchse der Pandora*, the original Lulu plays by Wedekind which continue to stand on their own terms. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Unashamed accompanists

From anonymity in early recordings, the accompanying keyboard player has gained no small recognition. **Tully Potter** exemplifies the qualities of an ideal vocal accompanist – and selects 10 artists as illustration

No one, it seems, goes to a vocal recital to hear the pianist. Even today, when wonderful song accompanists proliferate (men and women of high skill, broad musical sympathy and deep learning), a concert is sold on the singer's name – although critics no longer mention the pianist as a last-paragraph afterthought, to be cut out when the review runs over length.

In the late Victorian era, decent accompanists were so rare that the great baritone Sir George Henschel (1850-1934) took matters into his own hands. On his records you can hear him accompanying himself in fine style – his characterful 1928 Columbia disc of Schubert's 'Das wandern' and 'Der Leiermann', made when he was 78, was my childhood introduction to Lieder.

Many early records were simply labelled 'with piano', and listeners took the fumbles or complete car crashes as part of the fun. The first really professional accompanist was the Dutchman

Coenraad Valentijn Bos (1875-1955), who toured and recorded with famed singers such as Elena Gerhardt and his compatriot Julia Culp. A number of great pianists have appeared as accompanists but, with rare exceptions, should have given way to professionals. So should the conductors (I exempt Ferdinand Leitner and Wolfgang Sawallisch from this stricture).

The ideal accompanist must be conversant with all major song composers, ready to play any of their works in any key. He or she should be a psychologist, a mentor, a clairvoyant, a chameleon and a crisis manager. I have highlighted 10 who illustrate different facets of their scintillating art. Singers will tell you how much they learn from pianists, in what is really an equal partnership – and we in Britain are lucky to hear every day such masters as James Baillieu, Julius Drake, Simon Lepper Malcolm Martineau, Joseph Middleton, Anna Tilbrook and Roger Vignoles. **G**



Graham Johnson's traversal of Schubert's complete songs with various singers for Hyperion was 'epoch-making', the first volume won a Gramophone Award in 1989

PHOTOGRAPHY: BRILL/ULLSTEIN BILD VIA GETTY IMAGES



Michael Raucheisen
(1889–1984)

Schubert: Winterreise

Peter Anders *ten*
Acanta

The finest German accompanist of his time, Michael Raucheisen documented a vast array of Lieder for German radio during the Second World War. He had already achieved a *Winterreise* with Hans Hotter when he and Peter Anders embarked on another in February 1945, mostly using Schubert's original keys. With the Russians only 30 miles away, artillery can sometimes be heard. Both artists convey an intense, fraught intimacy unique in this cycle's discography.



James P Johnson
(1894–1955)

Backwater Blues

Bessie Smith *sng*
Sound & Vision download

The greatest of Harlem stride pianists and composer of jazz standards such as 'Carolina Shout' and 'The Charleston', James P Johnson had a colossal technique and sure-fire ability to transpose. He worked with such vocalists as Ma Rainey and Ethel Waters and was Bessie Smith's favourite accompanist. In this immortal recording of 'Backwater Blues' (Columbia, 1927), he provides surging waves of support for Bessie to launch one of her most rampaging performances.



Gerald Moore (1899–1987)

Schubert: Am Bach im Frühling, D361

Hans Hotter *bass-bar*
Warner (3/50)

After an early humiliation when trying to transpose Schubert's 'Wohin?' for Frieda Hempel, Gerald Moore became the doyen, brimful of wit, finding his way through any song while producing his ideal 'beautiful pianoforte tone'. To hear how he moulded his personality to each singer, compare versions of 'Fischerweise' with Elisabeth Grümmer and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. He and Hotter hit their tempo straight off in this 1949 recording, distilling the essence of togetherness.



Hertha Klust (1907–70)

Schumann: Liederkreis, Op 24

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau *bar*
Warner (5/95)

Slightly hard of hearing, Berlin-born former mezzo-soprano Hertha Klust had a monumental memory and an unequalled understanding of the central German opera and Lied repertoire. Among her many protégés was Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. This 1956 recording, part of an LP which HMV inexplicably attributed to Gerald Moore, demonstrates her clear vision and sensitivity to Schumann's (and Heine's) shifting Romantic moods, going some way to explain why she was so beloved.



Jacqueline Bonneau
(1917–2007)

Chabrier: Villanelle des petits canards

Jacques Jansen *bar*

Decca Eloquence (3/53)

An exquisite keyboard artist, French pianist Jacqueline Bonneau was best known for her work with Gérard Souzay, but I choose this lovely 1952 recital with another 'baryton Martin' – the ideal Pelléas, Jacques Jansen. It is worth drawing attention to this song (one of a group of four), for humour in music is normally so hard to pin down. In Bonneau's delicate yet precise rendition, the little ducks and their waddling gait come to life.



Erik Werba (1918–92)

Wolf: An eine Äolsharfe

Irmgard Seefried *sop*
DG Eloquence (7/93)

Echt wienerisch but

international in his outlook, Erik Werba covered some surprising repertoire. In the live DG recital culled from their 1953 German tour, he and Irmgard Seefried performed Mussorgsky and Bartók splendidly. I single out this difficult Wolf Lied, in which Werba's supremely well-judged playing conjures up not just the harp but also the wind stirring its strings – a prime example of an accompanist's contribution enhancing a singer's art.



Jörg Demus (b1928)

Schubert: Ach, um deine feuchten Schwingen

Elly Ameling *sop*
Warner

At his peak, the Austrian artist Jörg Demus brought a composer's sense of proportion to his work, to back up his feeling for keyboard colour. He was involved in many of Fischer-Dieskau's best records, but I have long loved the Schubert recital he set down with Elly Ameling in 1970. In the second of the *Suleikas Gesänge*, Demus's wonderful articulation in both hands, his rhythm and his tonal imagination perfectly complement her vivid singing.



Geoffrey Parsons
(1929–95)

Mendelssohn: Lieder

Janet Baker *mez*
Warner (7/82)

One of Australia's gifts to British (and world) music, Geoffrey Parsons commanded moods from the heroic through the nostalgic to the tender. He accompanied everybody, and his 1980 Mendelssohn recital with Janet Baker was a milestone in appreciation of the composer's Lieder, Parsons portraying with equal flair Heine's elves in 'Neue Liebe', his Romantic journey in 'Reiselied' or Hölt's all-flying, all-dancing witches in 'Hexenlied'. Note the marvellous left-hand flourishes.



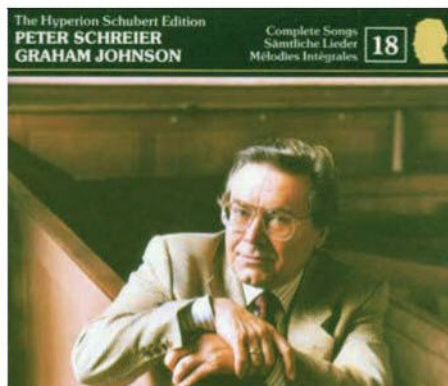
Dalton Baldwin (b1931)

Fauré: L'horizon chimérique

Gérard Souzay *bar*
Newton Classics (7/65)

Although New Jersey-born

Dalton Baldwin has given us beautiful Schubert and Schumann, notably with Ameling and Souzay, his heart is undoubtedly in the subtle chiaroscuro of French *mélodies*. Over the course of three decades, he and Souzay covered a vast range, but Baldwin's art was heard at its most penetrating in Fauré's sparsely written final cycles. In the last of all, recorded in 1964, Baldwin unerringly finds the pulse that runs through all of Fauré's music.



Graham Johnson (b1950)

Schubert: Auf der Bruck, D853

Peter Schreier *ten* Hyperion

As a southern African myself, I am proud that Graham Johnson comes from Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) – and how far he has travelled. No previous accompanist has matched his range of sympathies, his erudition and his programme-building skill, and as a writer he puts many of us scribes to shame. I have to feature something from his epoch-making

Schubertian omnium gatherum: with Peter Schreier in 1992, he fashioned a convincing cycle, entitled *Auf den wilden Wegen*, out of the nine-and-a bit Schulze songs of 1825–26. In the well-known 'Auf der Bruck', Johnson gives a masterclass in handling an obsessive strophic Lied with ritornello, potentially tiring for pianists.

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto

This formidable work reflects the composer's struggle against negativity and despair, and although it has an inescapably definitive reading, others generally do not disappoint, finds **David Gutman**

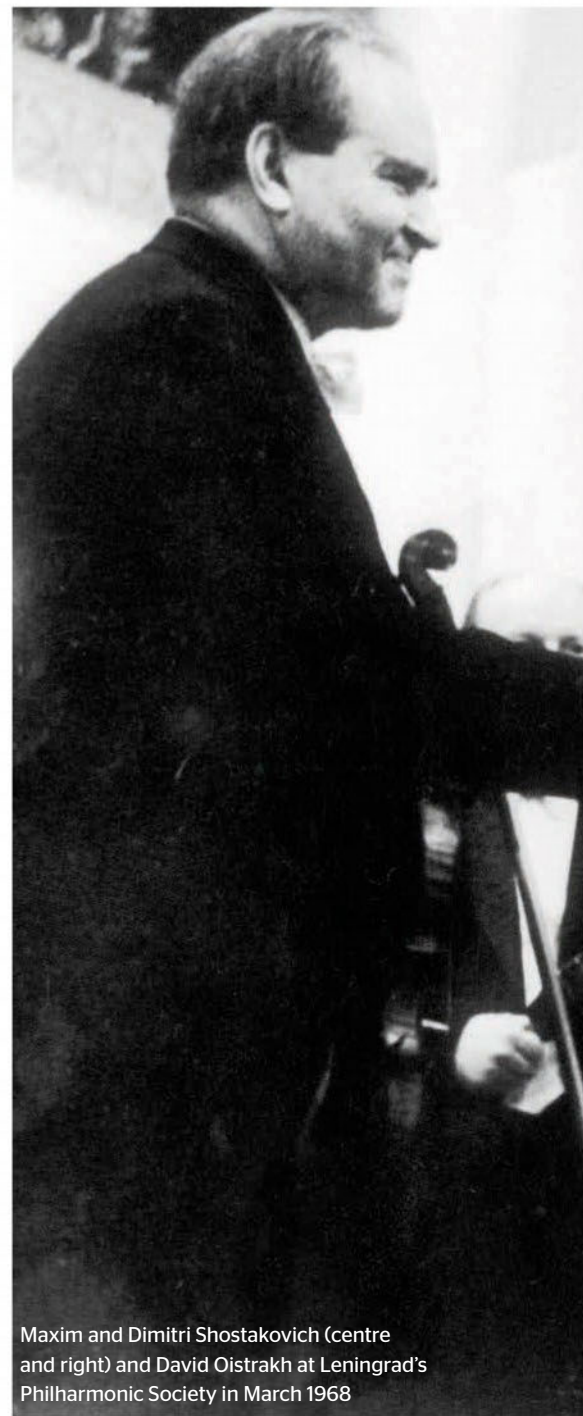
Harold C Schonberg, the respected American critic who contributed *Gramophone's* very own 'Letter from America' between November 1947 and December 1959, spoke for many of his contemporaries when he dismissed Shostakovich more or less out of hand. Having trashed Dimitri Mitropoulos's Columbia LP of the Tenth Symphony as 'an interpretation that somehow accents the basically thin, repetitive writing' (1/55), he was wary of the First Violin Concerto, given its impromptu Western premiere under the same conductor on December 29, 1955, during **David Oistrakh's** first and unexpectedly prolonged American tour. Unveiled only two months previously, after strenuous rehearsals with Yevgeny Mravinsky and the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, the work had not even been heard in Moscow. A surviving recording of Oistrakh's third Carnegie Hall collaboration with Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic on January 1, 1956, has been released commercially (NYP, 1/98 – nla). A day later, the performers reconvened for the familiar Columbia studio sessions. These are the earliest documents of an inescapably definitive interpretation. Schonberg was unmoved: 'I cannot say I care much for the music, which appears to me to be essentially a rewrite job' (3/56). He doesn't say what he thought it a rewrite of. Yet even in those sceptical times when occidental attitudes were warped by the political realities of the cold war, there were other views available. Violinist turned musicologist Boris Schwarz was in the audience on December 29, 'discovering, at the same time, a great composition and a great performer'.

At the sixth curtain call Mitropoulos held the score aloft to share in the ovation. Such was the extent of his photographic memory that aficionados claim he'd used it to steady Oistrakh's nerves rather than his own.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

No need to reinvent Shostakovich as a samizdat cryptographer to see this work in a sympathetic, nonconformist light. The facts speak for themselves. In 1948 the composer was the most prominent victim of the infamous campaign in which he, Prokofiev, Myaskovsky and Khachaturian were condemned for the intangible crime of 'formalism', part of a cultural clampdown entailing arrests and disappearances as well as loss of income and privilege. The score completed that year, it was consigned to a drawer and only unveiled (with Oistrakh's editorial tweaking) some seven years later when a political thaw was imminent.

The two opus numbers (Opp 77 and 99) ascribed to the First Violin Concerto are not the only reminder of those difficult years. It's impossible not to associate the second movement's introduction of Shostakovich's personal monogram (D-Es-C-H in German notation) with the plight of the individual voice in the face of mass terror. Nor, at a time when the regime was adopting an increasingly anti-Semitic tone, can we ignore an unmistakable 'Jewish' element shared with the contemporaneous Fourth String Quartet and song-cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*. The deployment of the DSCH motif, often seen as affirmative, could equally be intended as ironic comment on his own essential powerlessness. Such self-deprecation would be characteristic of



Maxim and Dimitri Shostakovich (centre and right) and David Oistrakh at Leningrad's Philharmonic Society in March 1968

Jewish humour. That said, to assume that Shostakovich always composed either 'for' or 'against' the system is too simple when the semantic indeterminacy of music is the very essence of its freedom. There were other factors: emotional entanglements, drink, football, family and the pull of creative abstraction.

STRUCTURE AND CHALLENGES

The Violin Concerto is symphonic in scope, suite-like in the titling of its movements – of which there are four (seemingly five where recordings in physical format separately track the massive



PHOTOGRAPHY: KEYSTONE-FRANCE/GAMMA-KEystone/GETTY IMAGES

cadenza). The opener, no breezy *allegro*, is a nocturne which can remain bleak or be made to reveal chinks of silvery light in dark velvet. In his 1956 article for *Sovetskaya Muzyka*, Oistrakh refers to the tempo as *Adagio*; the printed score has *Moderato*. The 'special effects' from harp, celesta and tam-tam are frequently almost inaudible on disc. Next comes the Scherzo, at once tactfully scored and classically structured; it is notably brittle and capricious in mood. The last two movements, labelled respectively Passacaglia and Burlesca, perhaps referencing Bach's purity of language and Mahler's dirty realism,

are linked by the increasingly frenzied reflections of the soloist alone. There are no overtly ingratiating ideas (Shostakovich is not one of those Russian composers whose inspiration is primarily melodic), though some strain to detect a kind of iconic recycling. Is that Elgar's Cello Concerto lurking behind the soloist's meandering opening line, Beethoven's fate motif stalking the Passacaglia, Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto (or Stravinsky's *Petrushka*) rallying the devilish Russianness of the finale? Probably not, but to each their own!

Whatever it represents or encodes, the concerto remains a technical challenge

for the soloist. The writing encourages an intensity of bow pressure that can lead to accidents. At his second New York performance, Oistrakh's E string snapped as he was starting the finale and he had to switch violins with the assistant concertmaster. More recently (in 1994), at the concert in London's Barbican Hall coinciding with his Abbey Road recording, Maxim Vengerov reached the closing bars of the piece before having to grab the violin off the LSO's then leader, Alexander Barantschik. Notwithstanding these trials, several violinists now play the finale's opening theme themselves, which was



'Forthright approach': Leonid Kogan with Russian conductor Kirill Kondrashin, pictured in 1959

the composer's original intention before Oistrakh suggested that the soloist required a break after the cadenza.

OISTRAKH VS KOGAN

It would be possible to discuss **David Oistrakh's** recordings – of which there are at least 10, official and otherwise – at length, only that would leave no space for the rest. In the studio, this virtuoso's tonal warmth and ultra-secure technique have one forgetting that challenges are being overcome. That's not quite true of the off-air recordings, where the purity of intonation can slip a little, given the tension of a live event. There are gains too, however. Live in New York, the Scherzo elicits spontaneous applause, speeds are more urgent, the expression edgier. The Leningrad alternatives, distinctive in matters of timbre, tend to be compromised by their woollier, compressed sonics. Oistrakh's final version, under a dour Maxim Shostakovich, was made in London in 1972 in the presence of the composer. By this time the sexagenarian's sound had thinned and flattened a little, the vibrato

less varied. While the apparent inevitability of every phrase survives intact and this is the best sounding of his studio efforts, Oistrakh is again close-miked at the expense of significant orchestral detail.

Performances from alternative contenders within the Soviet bloc often reached Western ears tardily and in indifferent transfers. Space dictates that we gloss over the likes of Julian Sitkovetsky, Igor Oistrakh, Oleg Kagan and Viktor Tretyakov. However, two recordings by **Leonid Kogan** enjoyed wider currency, presenting a potent challenge to Oistrakh senior. Kogan's earlier relay (1962) hit the UK catalogue eight years late in the bridge-building HMV/Melodiya series. This offers glorious violin playing with startling clarity of execution and an authentic grand line. A bonus is the very positive accompaniment from Kirill Kondrashin's Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra. Any doubts come with the Passacaglia. It's partly a matter of tempo, more an intangible feeling that the approach is not primarily concerned with conveying the very deepest emotion in

sound. Kogan chooses to remain within the jurisdiction of the score rather than risk too much self-exposure. We could draw parallels with his enthusiastic endorsement of state Communism, an attitude shared with Evgeny Svetlanov, his conductor at the composer's posthumous 70th birthday concert in 1976 (the film can be found on Japanese DVD or online). In any event, Kogan's 1962 performance is arguably the most brilliantly accomplished of them all. Had Jascha Heifetz played the concerto it might have sounded like this, unblemished and aloof.

WESTERN POPULARITY - AND A GAME CHANGER

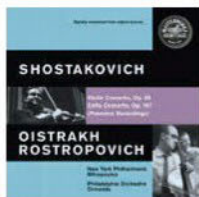
Jaw-dropping virtuosity is not a feature of Max Rostal's well-intentioned partnership with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Malcolm Sargent (Symposium – nla), a radio broadcast from the 1956 Proms of purely historical interest today. The commercial Western discography only started growing in the late 1980s, yet for today's younger players the work is core repertoire. In the first decade of the present century, with such rising stars as Baiba Skride (Sony, 8/06) and Leila Josefowicz (Warner, 7/06) securing major label exposure for their renditions, British violinist **Ruth Palmer** won plaudits for funding her own Shostakovich CD to mark the composer's centenary. Packaged with a documentary film and matching artwork colour-coded black and white with Soviet red, it was too persuasive to be dismissed as a vanity project. More recently, **Nicola Benedetti** has offered her own recording (2015), reflecting also on the long shadow cast by the concerto's dedicatee. Where Oistrakh had the moral authority and life experience to play the work with what she calls his 'luscious free sound', it is understandable that youthful performers feel the need to go further to bring out the terror in the music. 'The danger is that we play the fast movements with the ugliest sound we can produce and then play the slow movement with absolutely no vibrato, as if we are actually dying on the stage.'

THE CLASSIC CHOICE

Oistrakh *vn* **New York PO / Mitropoulos**

Sony Ⓜ ➔ MHK63327

David Oistrakh's earliest studio recording is probably the one to go for, demonstrating



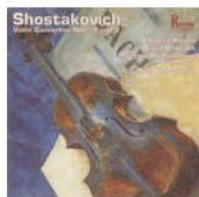
his matchless capacity for warmth without sentimentality. It's a definitive interpretation that subsequently became a little more stolid.

ALTERNATIVE AUTHENTICITY

Kogan *vn* **Moscow PO / Kondrashin**

Russian Disc Ⓢ ➔ RDCD11025

Then and now, Leonid Kogan is David Oistrakh's main rival, his more forthright



approach lent additional authority by Kirill Kondrashin's driven accompaniment – or what you can hear of it in not so glorious mono.

A DIFFERENT MODEL

Batiashvili *vn* **Bavarian RSO / Salonen**

DG Ⓢ ➔ 477 9299GH

This is one of several intriguing hi-tech options in which neither timbre nor



packaging seem inhibited by Soviet precedent. At times the expression is a little cool, even dreamy, but the orchestra is now an equal partner.

says Benedetti, who steers a middle course and should delight her admirers. But then most of the listed alternatives, whether or not freighted with personal memories of life behind the Iron Curtain, combine emotional sympathy, fine tuning and a decent variety of sound and articulation.

Often trading on musicians with Soviet connections, the earlier Western issues include some legendary names plus a few whose sympathy with the idiom is less evident. Not so **Viktoria Mullova**, then and now a remarkable technician, even if her 1988 reading swings between detachment and tensile ferocity to inspire admiration rather than love. **Itzhak Perlman**, wont to project a more affable musical personality, is for once not quite unassailable in a live recording from Tel Aviv. With **Boris Belkin** pleasantly generalised, it's another Russian-Jewish émigré who strikes sparks. **Lydia Mordkovitch**, an Oistrakh pupil, posits an essentially lyrical take on her teacher's interpretation. She can be gutsy too. Revisiting a disc whose quality was recognised by a *Gramophone* Award in 1990, one is struck afresh by the positive contribution of Neeme Järvi, his then orchestra and the Chandos sound engineers. Together they create a grand and detailed soundscape from the not obviously lustrous Glasgow venue. While Dmitry Sitkovetsky (Erato, 9/90), Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg (EMI, 12/92 – nla) and Midori (Sony, 12/98) have enjoyed more limited circulation in the UK, **Jaap van Zweden's** 1994 ex-RCA disc is back in contention courtesy of Naxos, lent curiosity value by his recent prominence as a conductor but not noticeably superior to the label's pre-existing version with Kogan pupil **Ilya Kaler** (1996).

The game-changing release of the mid-1990s is both traditional in its insistence on the emotive force of the music and radical in its embrace of extreme varieties of articulation. **Maxim Vengerov** may perhaps have been persuaded by Mstislav Rostropovich to adopt his spacious tempos – even Mordkovitch doesn't give the Nocturne this much room. We have now arrived at the somnambulistic Adagio that Oistrakh reported in 1956. Lingering over the cadenza too, Vengerov offers an extra edge of youthful adrenalin and excitement in the second and fourth movements to compensate for Oistrakh's authenticity of experience – that essentially sweet, penetrating tone coarsening whenever the expression demands. There's a throbbing insistence about his playing to which not everyone responds. Nevertheless, it's easy to hear why this was a *Gramophone* Award winner in 1995 and is widely regarded as a modern classic.



Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Khachaturian – composers who were all condemned for 'formalism'

Some may prefer **Vadim Repin's** swifter view as coloured by the Hallé Orchestra's precise and limpid accompaniment under Kent Nagano (1995). You can actually hear the Nocturne's low tam-tam strokes and appreciate the Passacaglia's formal moorings. Later (in 2014), live in Paris under Valery Gergiev on DVD or Blu-ray,

there's less focus on chamber-like intimacy. Repin now has the sheer heft though not always, in the opening movement, the certainty of intonation one expects; he launches the finale himself as per Shostakovich's original design. Even more than Repin in 1995, the young **Hilary Hahn** (2000 and 2002) exudes confidence, finding

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

RECORDING DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1956 Oistrakh NYPO / Mitropoulos	Sony (M) ▶ MHK63327; (M) 88697 00812-2 (7/56 ^R , 2/07)
1956 Oistrakh Leningrad PO / Mravinsky	Orfeo (F) C736 081B
1956 Oistrakh Leningrad PO / Mravinsky	Alto (S) ALC1337; Praga Digitals (M) DSD350 059 (1/59 ^R , 4/88 ^R)
1962 Kogan Moscow PO / Kondrashin	Russian Disc (F) ▶ RDCC11025 (2/70 ^R , 7/70 ^R)
1972 Oistrakh New Philh Orch / M Shostakovich	EMI/Warner (S) 17 214712-2 (1/74 ^R)
1988 Belkin RPO / Ashkenazy	Decca Eloquence (M) 4676042 (8/90 ^R)
1988 Mullova RPO / Previn	Decca (S) 475 7431; Philips (S) 475 2602PTR3 (6/89 ^R)
1988 Perlman Israel PO / Mehta	Warner (M) 2564 61297-8; (S) (77 discs) 2564 61506-9 (1/90 ^R)
1989 Mordkovitch SNO / N Järvi	Chandos (B) CHAN10864 (4/90 ^R)
1994 van Zweden Netherlands Rad PO / De Waart	Naxos (B) 8 573271
1994 Vengerov LSO / Rostropovich	Teldec (B) 4509 92256-2 (2/95); Apex (S) 2564 68039-7; Warner (S) (20 discs) 2564 63151-4
1995 Repin Hallé Orch / Nagano	Erato (S) ▶ 0630 10696-6 (1/96); Warner (S) 10 ▶ 2564 63263-2
1996 Kaler Polish Nat RSO / Wit	Naxos (B) 8 550814 (10/97)
2000 Hahn BPO / Jansons	EuroArts (M) DVD 202 0248; (F) DVD 205 0448 (9/11 ^R)
2001 Gringolts Israel PO / Perlman	DG (F) 471 616-2GH (10/02)
2002 Hahn Oslo PO / Janowski	Sony (M) SK89921 (4/03); (S) 88875 12618-2
2005 Chang BPO / Rattle	EMI/Warner (M) ▶ 346053-2 (5/06); (S) 2 ▶ 237686-2
2005 Hope BBC SO / M Shostakovich	Warner (S) 2564 66054-2 (6/06 ^R)
2006 Khachatryan French Nat Orch / Masur	Naïve (F) V5025 (11/06)
2006 Palmer Philh Orch / B Wallfisch	Quartz (F) QTZ2045 (A/06)
2006 Steinbacher Bavarian RSO / Nelsons	Orfeo (F) C687 061A
2007 S Rozhdestvensky Russian St SO / G Rozhdestvensky	Nimbus (F) NI6123
2010 Batiashvili Bavarian RSO / Salonen	DG (F) 477 9299GH (3/11)
2011 Kavakos Mariinsky Orch / Gergiev	Mariinsky (F) MAR 0524 (7/15)
2012 Ehnes Bournemouth SO / Karabits	Onyx (F) ONYX4113 (8/13)
2012 Zimmermann NDR Elbphilh / Gilbert	BIS (F) BIS2247 (2/17)
2013 Tetzlaff Helsinki PO / Storgårds	Online (F) ODE1239-2 (11/14)
2014 Repin Mariinsky Orch / Gergiev	Arthaus (F) 8 DVD 107 551; (F) 4 ▶ 107 552 (10/15)
2015 Benedetti Bournemouth SO / Karabits	Decca (F) 478 8758DH (8/16)
2016 Lamsma Netherlands Rad PO / Gaffigan	Challenge (F) CC72681 (9/17)

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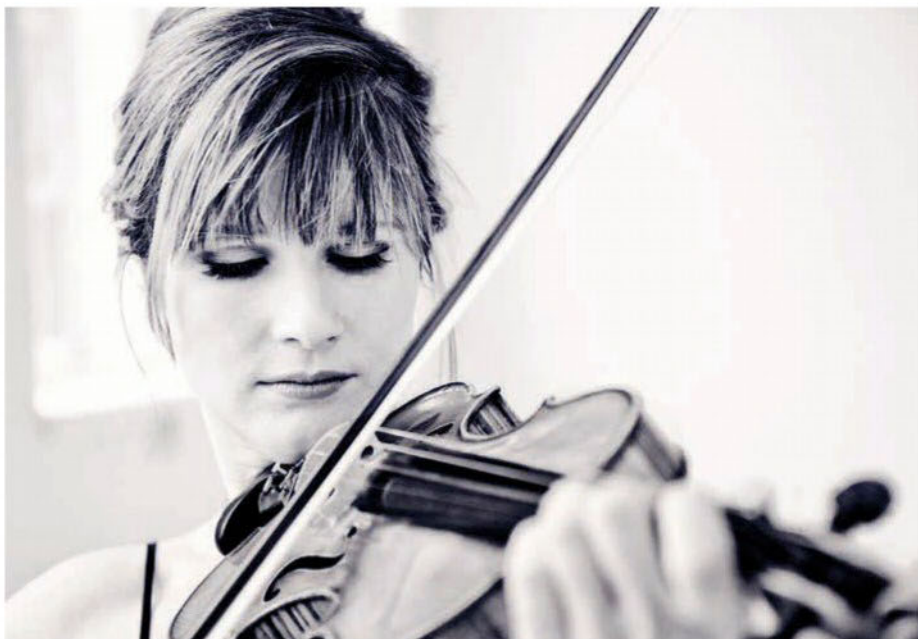
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Lisa Batiashvili's account for DG was Gramophone's Recording of the Month in March 2011

a straight line through the music without strain. The Nocturne is Vengerov-broad but with an emotional reticence some find refreshing, others unidiomatic. Her elfin presence in sound and vision contrasts with Oistrakh's masculine solidity (in online footage) yet both are undemonstrative performers who leave the notes to do the communicating.

VARIETY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In recent years, this dispassionate, less apprehensive approach has won favour with some of our most accomplished violinists. **Leonidas Kavakos** (2011) underplays the music's dark, granitic strength and sense of danger with his rapturous sound but gets away with it. And Gergiev is on his best behaviour in support. **James Ehnes** (2012) may be thought too muted, although again the effect can be lovely, the music explaining itself without frills. The first movement becomes magical rather than merely bleak; however, the weightless fluency of the Passacaglia and avoidance of visceral 'italicisation' works less well. Standing between these cooler customers and those favouring a more interventionist approach, **Lisa Batiashvili** (2010) brings an expressive eloquence all her own. At first her vibrato-shy, almost weightless Nocturne seems droopy in its implausibly resonant space. Still, this is a production very much of our own time. Esa-Pekka Salonen and his Bavarian Radio forces transform the battleship grey of Soviet-era Shostakovich into something timeless and crystal clear. The more aggressive content may be undersold but I was suitably bewitched

even without the glamour photography adorning DG's booklet.

For the same label, **Ilya Gringolts** (2001) is less consistently interesting. Perlman, now graduated to the podium, fails to capitalise on his soloist's rubato-heavy delivery of the cadenza, making the launch of the finale a pedestrian affair. Not that headphone listeners will get this far – there's too much close-miked heavy breathing. **Daniel Hope** (2005) compensates for his relative fragility of tone and technique with a very detailed response to markings, but you'll know as soon as his exaggerated observation of the accents just after fig 5 (2'40") whether this is the version for you. Oistrakh's emphatic articulation has morphed into scratchiness and the tuning can be iffy.

The appeal of **Sarah Chang** and **Arabella Steinbacher** (2005 and 2006 respectively) is enhanced by unusually demonstrative orchestral support. Employing wide vibrato in the Nocturne and blood-and-guts bowing elsewhere, Chang has Sir Simon Rattle indulging his enthusiasm for textural micromanagement but also ensuring that the Passacaglia can actually be heard as variations on a ground. Steinbacher, exceptionally broad and sensitive, is in Bavaria rather than Berlin with an enthusiastic Andris Nelsons. Not content with illuminating functionally significant threads, he builds terrific climaxes. Sadly their folkish congeniality in the finale is a let-down. **Sergey Khachatryan's** 2006 reading is very fine if relatively orthodox, stymied a little by Kapellmeisterish support from the French National Orchestra under Kurt Masur. By the time **Sasha Rozhdestvensky** made his

recording in 2007, his distinguished father had lost some of his earlier pep. More eccentric is the live 2012 offering from **Frank Peter Zimmermann** which sets out to give us the score *come scritto* before Oistrakh got to it. Swifter than anyone in the slower music, Zimmermann is not the first soloist to reclaim the finale's initial melody. More distracting are the intrusive slides, perhaps implied by bowing instructions in the original score.

At a time when Shostakovich's struggle against negativity and despair has never seemed more relevant, the newest version, from Dutch youngster **Simone Lamsma**, makes the direction of travel unproblematic, the lighting overbright. But if **Christian Tetzlaff's** careful balance of old and new is indicative of how the performance tradition might evolve, we're unlikely to lose that familiar brooding quality altogether. Where Oistrakh's earlier recordings would seem to have been made on a Stradivarius spirited away to the East after the fall of Berlin, today's German virtuoso uses a leaner-toned, modern instrument by Stefan-Peter Greiner, plus a brace of bows. In the Scherzo, its normally immaculate sonic profile is roughed up just enough to create the requisite sense of anxiety. Nor is there any lack of intensity in the Passacaglia where John Storgårds and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra are more linear, analytical partners than are Rostropovich and the LSO for Vengerov. The finale doesn't exactly go like the wind until its closing stages. Still, there's nothing cerebral about this music-making.

Something more overtly rhetorical would be my own preference. Then again, as critical opinion changes over time you'll need to find the recording which enriches your own listening in 2018. That might or might not be the version you heard first. We are certainly spoilt for choice. It goes without saying that Oistrakh, a king among 20th-century musicians, was to some degree responsible for what we take to be 'authentic' in the playing of his successors. Nonetheless, if only on sonic grounds, I'm inclined to put Vengerov ahead by a nose. **G**

THE TOP CHOICE

Vengerov vs LSO / Rostropovich

Teldec @ 4509 92256-2

Vengerov and Rostropovich are at their most formidable in a dark, claustrophobic



interpretation that locates the piece squarely in its historical context. No soloist is more ferociously articulate across so wide a range of sonorities.

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live concert and opera performances from around the world, and reviews of archived music-making available online to stream where you want, when you want

Barbican, London & online

Semyon Bychkov conducts Mahler, February 4

It's Mahler with no distractions as Semyon Bychkov conducts the full forces of the London Symphony Orchestra and London Symphony Chorus, as Mahler's epically-scaled *Resurrection* Symphony No 2 is the only work on the programme. The soloists will be well worth turning out or tuning in for too, as they're the soprano Christiane Karg and mezzo Anna Larsson. The concert will be streamed live on the LSO's Youtube channel.

lso.co.uk, [youtube.com/user/Lso/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/Lso/videos)

Kölner Philharmonie & online

Benjamin Grosvenor plays Beethoven, February 7

Thoughts of the nature, the universe and self-realisation are the theme of this concert from the Güzénich-Orchester Köln, led by their General Music Director François-Xavier Roth. Their commitment to newer music comes to the fore in their programme's bookending works, Pierre Boulez's *Livre* for string orchestra of 1968, and Béla Bartók's 1943 Concerto for Orchestra. Then, for the central concerto, they jump back in time to Beethoven's Piano

Concerto No 2, for which they're joined by Benjamin Grosvenor. The concert is being live streamed in HD video, and will then remain online for catch-up viewing.

en.guerzenich-orchester.de/

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden & Cinemas in the UK, US & Paris

Dan Ettinger conducts Tosca, February 7

This live cinema broadcast of Jonathan Kent's production of *Tosca* has a great line-up of artists, two of whom are top Canadians: Adrienne Pieczonka in the title role and Gerald Finley as Scarpia. Cavaradossi meanwhile is deliciously cast, with Joseph Calleja. Then, on the podium is one of the younger generation of leading conductors, Dan Ettinger. (Ahead of the relay, Gerald Finley talks to *Gramophone*'s James Jolly about the role of Scarpia at a Royal Opera Insights event on February 5.)

roh.org.uk/showings, roh.org.uk/insights

Philharmonie, Berlin & online

Simon Rattle conducts Paul Whiteman classics, February 10

This late-night concert from Simon Rattle

and members of the Berlin Philharmonic is something a bit different and well worth catching. Regarded as the King of Jazz, Paul Whiteman with his orchestra was responsible for pushing jazz into high culture in the 1920s, paving the way for composers such as Gershwin. This concert therefore celebrates Whiteman's genius and Rattle's enthusiasm for him with a properly toe-tapping programme of the American composer and bandleader's arrangements of jazz hits such as 'Makin' Whoopee', 'Dardanella' and 'My Blue Heaven'.

digitalconcerthall.com

Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco & online via KDRC Radio

Blomstedt returns to the SFSO, February 8, 9 & 10 in concert, broadcast February 20

The San Francisco Symphony's Conductor Laureate Herbert Blomstedt is on the podium for what sounds like a concert well worth catching. First, for a chance to hear Garrick Ohlson as soloist in Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto, and second because the other piece on the programme isn't such a regular in the concert hall; the Scandinavian masterpiece that is Stenhammar's Symphony No 2.

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Peter Eötvös conducts his work for organs and orchestra from the opening season of Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie

Eötvös

Peter Eötvös has always been good at beginnings. His *zeroPoints* is a composed sequence of them and his new *concertante* work with organ, *Multiversum*, lifts off from the D minor flourish (maybe by Bach, maybe not) that defines the instrument in popular imagination. Celesta, Hammond organ and spaced, brassy orchestral groupings help to define a cosmic scale for the half-hour, three-movement piece that fills Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie at its premiere, given by a touring Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under the composer, and comes across persuasively on film thanks to excellent sound-production values and attentive camerawork.

As the new hall's titular organist, Iveta Apkalna draws from her Klais instrument a



timbral range somewhere in the satellite regions of *Volumina* by Eötvös's fellow-Hungarian György Ligeti: no Gothic clichés, no block-chord oppositions but an all-enveloping sound world filled with acoustic space-dust. Interviews and rehearsals in the (mostly German) 'making-

of interval documentary show soloist and composer-conductor ('Ich bin 50-50') shedding invaluable light on the fantastical workings-out of an idiom that continues to draw both strength and individuality from the long-settled battles in postwar European modernism.

Multiversum is prefaced here by rhythmically trenchant, superbly defined accounts of music by earlier guiding lights: Schoenberg (*Accompaniment to a Film Scene*), Bartók (*Dance Suite*) and Stravinsky (Symphony in Three Movements). As a

Concertgebouw member remarks, Eötvös knows precisely what he wants and how to get it. **Peter Quantrill**

Available to watch for free at elbphilharmonie.de/en/worldwide/royal-concertgebouw-orchestra-amsterdam/74 and also on YouTube

Olivier Py directs Francis Poulenc's powerful *Dialogues des Carmélites* at La Monnaie in Brussels**Poulenc**

Recent productions of *Dialogues des Carmélites* have seen a variety of artful ways of staging its heart-wrenching final scene; the guillotine itself is increasingly noticeable by its absence. So it is, too, with Olivier Py's concentrated La Monnaie staging. Our Carmelites, arranged in a defiant line downstage, are each struck by some invisible force before slinking away into a starlit void. It's stylish, powerfully suggestive and moving, and serves as a fitting climax to a production that, in a fluid, dark and confined setting, offers many striking images – not least in its intermittent recreation, with the aid of cardboard cutouts, of religious tableaux.

Alain Altinoglu offers taut musical leadership, with Poulenc's wind writing in particular coming into focus, and the theatre has gathered together a terrific cast. Véronique Gens is supremely noble as Madame Lidoine, and Blanche proves



an excellent fit for Patricia Petibon's special brand of wide-eyed wonder, the soprano's vibrant red coiffure offering one of very few dashes of colour among multiple shades of grey. Sophie Pondjiclis is not the most memorable Madame de Croissy, perhaps, but her big scene is

certainly memorably staged. Ultimately, this smart, affecting show lets Poulenc's masterpiece pack the emotional punch it should.

Hugo Shirley

Available to view for free at operavision.eu until June 14

The three concert performances are being recorded by KDFC radio, streamed on January 20, and then available for catch-up listening for 21 days afterwards.

sfsymphony.org, kdfc.com

Metropolitan Opera, New York & cinemas worldwide

L'elisir d'amore, February 10

Bartlett Sher's vibrant production of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* returns to the Met, with Catherine Zuber's colourful costumes and a stellar cast conducted by Domingo Hindoyan. Singing the feisty Adina is the South African soprano Pretty Yende, while Matthew Polenzani plays her earnest and lovesick Nemorino. Baritone Davide Luciano is the military braggart Belcore, and then the ebullient charlatan Dulcamara is sung by the bass Ildebrando D'Arcangelo.

metopera.org

Philharmonie, Berlin & online

Vasily Petrenko makes his BPO debut, February 10

Gramophone's current Artist of the Year, the conductor Vasily Petrenko, musical chief in both Liverpool and Oslo, stands in for an indisposed Zubin Mehta to make his Berlin Phil debut. It's a programme with something for everyone – Schubert's *Rosamunde* Overture, Schoenberg's Violin Concerto (with Michael Barenboim, also making his BPO debut), Ravel's *La valse* and the Second Suite from

Daphnis et Chloé, a score the Berliners have always played ravishingly as far back as the days of Herbert von Karajan (who made a classic DG recording in the early 1960s).

digitalconcerthall.com

Griegshallen, Bergen & online

Christian Zacharias conducts the Bergen Philharmonic, February 16

This live streamed concert sees Christian Zacharias join the Bergen Philharmonic for a concert centred around 1784. This was the year Haydn was commissioned to write his groundbreaking six 'Paris' Symphonies, including the popular *Hen* Symphony (No 83) on the Bergen's programme. Mozart meanwhile had moved to Vienna, where he was proceeding to impress the public with a series of piano concertos including No 19, K459, which Zacharias will direct from the piano as soloist. His programme's other two works are Mozart's Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*, plus a 20th-century neoclassical charmer, Poulenc's *Sinfonietta*.

harmonien.no

Concert Hall, Gothenburg & online

James Ehnes plays Beethoven, February 23

Having recently given us a very impressive recording of the Beethoven Violin Concerto (for Onyx, with the RLPO and Andrew Manze, a *Gramophone* Editor's Choice in November) here's a chance to catch James Ehnes in the same work in concert with the Gothenburg SO

and Kent Nagano. Ehnes is a player absolutely at the top of his game, so here's an opportunity worth grabbing. Before the Beethoven comes Mendelssohn's Symphony No 5, *Reformation*, and, to open the concert and lodge Bach's chorale theme firmly in the mind, is *Ein feste Burg* (which reappears in the Mendelssohn symphony to such fine effect).

gso.se/en/gsoplay

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden & Cinemas in the UK, US & Paris

The Winter's Tale, February 28

Already established in the repertoire as a 'modern classic', *The Winter's Tale* – adapted from the Shakespeare play – was created for the Royal Ballet by its Artistic Associate Christopher Wheeldon in 2014, and has already been revived once, in 2016. Pretty impressive. So if you haven't yet seen this critically acclaimed production, then this second revival is your chance. Plus it features the original dancers who have made it their own, Edward Watson as Leontes, Lauren Cuthbertson as Hermione, Sarah Lamb as Perdita, Steven McRae as Florizel, Laura Morera as Paulina, and with Matthew Ball joining them for the first time as Polixenes. The score is by Joby Talbot, who also wrote the music for Wayne MacGregor's *Chroma*, and the massively popular *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the Royal Ballet's first full-length commission in over 20 years.

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● THE TECHNOLOGY THAT MAKES THE MOST OF YOUR MUSIC ●

THIS MONTH a powerful amplifier with digital appeal, striking speakers from a surprising source and why everyone's talking about voice control **Andrew Everard, Audio Editor**

Turntable twists and smarter speakers

More ways of accessing your favourite music from this month's roster of new audio arrivals

Just when you thought turntable specialist Pro-Ject couldn't find any more twists on its successful formula, it comes up with a few more. This time around it's a novel range of variations on its popular Essential III model and an upgraded record-cleaning machine for those with large collections or second-hand vinyl buyers.

No fewer than five new versions are available in the Essential III Flexirange, enabling buyers to choose just the features they want, and all come in a choice of high-gloss black, red or white finishes. The £279 Essential III Phono **1** comes complete with a built-in phono pre-amp, allowing it to be used straight into systems and amplifiers having only line-level inputs, while the £319 SB has electronic speed switching and the Essential III BT has both a phono stage and Bluetooth built in, giving it a wireless connection to suitable systems, amplifiers DACs or even headphones. The £319 Essential III Digital allows the user to select between an analogue line-level output and 96kHz/24-bit digital, while the RecordMaster variant, at £349, has electronic speed selection, a built-in phono stage and a USB output to connect to a computer for ripping of LPs to digital files.



Pro-Ject's £349 VC-S MkII record cleaning machine **2** has an improved, lower-noise motor, a redesigned clamp to keep labels dry, an enhanced suction arm and a better cleaning brush. It comes with a starter pack of the company's Wash-IT cleaning solution good for around 150 records, and a dustcover and 7in record adaptor are available as options.

From record players to a massive power amplifier, and the McIntosh MC1.25KW **3** is the American company's most powerful single-chassis monobloc, with a 1200W output. With a huge power meter dominating the front panel and weighing no less than 71.7kg apiece, the new amplifier is available at £29,995 a pair.

Rather less expensive is the little Bang & Olufsen Beoplay M3 **4**, the smallest wireless speaker in the Play range. Standing just 11.2cm tall, it comes in black or white, with a choice of aluminium or wool speaker covers, at prices starting from £279. Twin 40W amplifiers drive the built-in two-way speaker system and the M3 has Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity supporting AirPlay, Google Chromecast, TuneIn radio, Deezer and B&O's own multiroom system.

New from iFi is the nano iDSD Black Label DAC/headphone amplifier **5**, a battery-powered device with file handling all the way up to 384kHz/24-bit PCM and DSD256. It's MQA-compatible, and offers both headphone and fixed line-level outputs, as well as working with balanced headphones. It sells for £199.

Finally, a new speaker cable from QED. XT25 **6** features technology trickled from its flagship Supremus cable, including a hollow 'air-core' design called X-Tube Plus, around which are arranged its oxygen-free conductors. Designed as an upgrade for all speakers, it comes pre-terminated to suit the user's needs at £5 per plug, meaning that a 3m pair is less than £90. **G**

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FEBRUARY TEST DISCS



Sparkling sound marks out this live recording of Debussy's opera, a comparative rarity on the LSO Live label, beautifully captured by Tony Faulkner at the Barbican in 2016.



The usual gloriously vibrant sound quality of the Norwegian 2L label ensures this set by pianist Tina Margareta Nilssen really shines – especially in hi-res versions up to DSD256.

● **REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH**

T+A Cala CDR

This compact all-in-one system has both flexibility and performance – and some light at the end of the tunnel!

The all-in-one network audio system may be a relatively recent arrival on the audio scene but it's a market sector that's seen rapid growth and diversification, to the point where it's perfectly possible to spend less than £500, or considerably more than £5000, on such a one-box 'just add speakers' solution. It's not hard to see why such systems have gained rapid acceptance: not only do they answer a common criticism of hi-fi, in that high-quality systems seem to involve a stack of boxes in varying degrees of aesthetic accord, but they also solve all the 'messy stuff' of networked audio, by providing a set-up in which most of the hard work has already been done.

That's how network music has changed over the past few years: it has moved from being the preserve of the enthusiast, so tricky that even some of the retailers selling some of the early systems hadn't that much of a clue, to something that (usually) just works. After all, consumers are used to the simple streaming offered by the likes of Spotify and Tidal on their phones, and quite rightly expect their shiny new hi-fi system to be just as intuitive.

That user-appeal definitely comes as part of the deal in the latest Cala models from the German high-end company T+A. Handbuilt, like all its products, in Herford,

North Rhine-Westphalia, the Cala SR and CDR are the second generation of T+A's compact network systems: the SR is the less expensive streaming receiver, selling for £2313, while the CDR we have here includes a CD transport to bridge the demands of physical and computer-stored media, and sells for £3242.

Consumers are used to the streaming on their phones and quite rightly expect their shiny new hi-fi system to be just as intuitive

Two things immediately catch the eye when the Cala CDR is unboxed and set up, connecting to a home network via Ethernet or Wi-Fi. The first is that the system is relatively compact, at just 37cm wide and 10.5cm tall, with part of that height taken up by the integral stand on which it sits, meaning the section housing the electronics is actually even more slimline. The second point – and one can hardly miss it when the system is switched on – is the LED lighting built into the lower section of the rear panel, which shines through the 'tunnel' between the electronics housing and the support. This lighting is switchable

T+A CALA CDR



Type Network music system

Price £3242

Power output 50W per channel into 8 ohms, 100Wpc into 4 ohms

Built-in sources CD player, DAB/FM tuner, DLNA network playback, internet radio, Deezer/Qobuz/Tidal

Inputs Two line (with passthrough/MM phono options), two optical and two coaxial digital, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi/Ethernet networking, 2xUSB Type A

Outputs One pair of speakers, line out, mono subwoofer, headphones

File formats played MP3, WMA, AAC, OGG-Vorbis (up to 320kbps); AIFF, FLAC and WAV to 192kHz/32 bit

Accessories supplied Remote handset, Bluetooth and FM antennae

Finishes Black, silver

Dimensions (WxHxD) 37x10.5x24.5cm

ta-hifi.de

kogaudio.com (UK distributor)

between red, white, green and blue, and can be dimmed in 10 steps, switched between on and 'breathing' (in which the light continuously varies in intensity), or simply turned off. It may seem churlish to suggest that the last of these options is preferable but, while the efforts of the T+A designers to do something different is to be applauded, they may have let

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CALA CDR

Make the most of the Cala CDR's phono input facility with this value-for-money Pro-Ject Essential III turntable.



KEF Q950S LOUDSPEAKERS

The Cala CDR may be compact but it can drive even large speakers, such as these KEF Q950s, with plenty of conviction.



their ideas run away with them here: the light is very bright and more than capable of illuminating the room, meaning it's attention-grabbing on first encounter and quickly somewhat distracting. That's the case with the black-finished version of the system; the more reflective silver finish will make the light even brighter.

On the subject of finish, the CDR is certainly well put together. Its main chassis is milled from a single piece of aluminium and has a high-quality anodised finish, while the operation of the CD loader is smooth and quiet. There's nothing much to say about the controls, simply because there are none on the unit itself: everything is operated by the FM1000 handset provided.

Simple though that may make the T+A appear, it's actually very flexible. As well as its onboard CD player, network streaming and DAB/FM/internet radio, it can access services including Deezer, Qobuz and Tidal (subject to the usual subscriptions), play music from USB storage and allow the connection of external sources. There's Bluetooth for wireless streaming from portable devices and computers, two optical and two coaxial digital inputs, and a pair of analogue inputs, one of which can be switched into fixed-gain passthrough mode for use in an AV system, while the other is configurable as analogue line-in or moving magnet phono for use with a turntable. The limit on all the 'hi-res' digital inputs is 192kHz/32 bit but for most users that won't be any drawback: yes, some rivals push up into higher PCM sampling frequencies or even offer DSD capability but few listeners will have much in their collections to test those limits.

As well as the speaker outputs, the CDR has both analogue outputs and a mono subwoofer out, plus a headphone socket – although the placing of this last on the rear panel is less convenient than a conventional front-panel output. And delving into the menu system reveals further levels of flexibility: as well as the usual bass and treble controls, the system also lets you adjust the mid-range, and there's a 'contour presence' adjustment to improve vocal intelligibility plus a 'contour fundamental' setting offering varying degrees of warmth

in the sound. A switchable loudness circuit works in tandem with the volume control and you have a choice of straight stereo or a rather 'obvious' virtual surround setting.

PERFORMANCE

With a healthy 50W-per-channel output into 8 ohms – the headline 100W figure is into a 4 ohm load – the CDR is more than capable of driving the kind of speakers with which it's likely to be used. It was tried with a range of speakers, from the usual PMC and Neat references right down to the Polk Signature S20 model also reviewed this month, and in each case the little T+A system proved more than up to the job of driving the speakers very well indeed.

However, it's clear after some extensive listening that there is a rather pronounced smoothness and warmth to the sound here, even without recourse to the various tonal adjustments on offer; with everything 'flat' the balance is seemingly tailored to make music easy to enjoy at the risk of slight anonymity and even turning the 'presence' and treble up a bit fails to shoot the sound through with sufficient vitality and bite.

Of course, that'll be no bad thing for many a listener, and the Cala always sounds rich and weighty, with not a hint of brashness or over-enthusiasm in the treble, even when used with the sparky little Polk speakers. Nevertheless, to these ears, a bit more airiness wouldn't go amiss, and some instrumental timbres can sound a little over-polished. On the plus side, the tonal balance here does make this system extremely easy to match with a wide range of loudspeakers.

There's no shortage of dynamic ability and neither does the T+A ever sound slow or rhythmically lazy, with the interplay of a focused small ensemble as striking as the scale of a full orchestra, and even solo piano both well weighted and precise. However, what's lacking is a little sparkle and the sense of air that helps delineate the acoustic in which the recording was made, meaning that while the performance is very much centre stage, the size and shape of that stage could be clearer. Things are just a little two-dimensional.

That said, the sonic fingerprint of the Cala is a commercially astute one, in that this compact system will punch above

Or you could try ...

As noted in recent issues, there's plenty of competition in the all-in-one network music systems field, with many manufacturers offering their own twist on the concept.

Marantz MCR-611 system

If you want to explore what streaming can do for you, you can start as



low as £400 or less with the long-running Marantz MCR-611 system, which offers CD playback, a built-in radio tuner and network music playback, all in a compact, high-gloss housing. Find out more at marantz.co.uk

Technics SU-C550

The £1200

Technics SU-C550



offers a similar specification to the T+A but in a very different design, complete with a top-mounted CD transport. Much of the technology here is trickled down from the company's flagship products, including the JENO Engine system to reduce digital noise and Load Adaptive Phase Calibration to optimise the amplification for the speakers with which the system is used. More information at technics.co.uk

AVM Inspiration CS2.2

The £3995

AVM Inspiration CS2.2 is again the same kind



of concept as the T+A and, like the Cala CDR, is handbuilt in Germany. But the major gain here is in power, the relatively compact casework containing amplification able to deliver a hefty 165W per channel. This may be AVM's entry-level model but it offers very superior performance. Find out more at avm-audio-uk.com

its weight in its ability to drive speakers and always sound mature, refined and controlled. In a market not exactly short of rivals, it's a solid, safe choice – if not quite a shining light. **G**

● REVIEW POLK AUDIO SIGNATURE S20

US speakers make a splash

Innovative technology promises big bass from these (relatively) compact speakers but is that all they're about?

Attending press events may be out of fashion in these days of live-streamed presentations and online information packs, to the extent that I'm hearing some of my colleagues suggesting that attending major shows is no longer worthwhile when they can do all the newsgathering from the comfort of their desk. However, such events can usually be relied on to serve up some unexpected treats off the main agenda, and some of my best discoveries have been made when walking the halls of a show 'mopping up' exhibits long after the main rush of headline announcements have been made.

There's something highly attractive about the vibrant, peppy way these speakers go about playing music

I was reminded of that when I discovered the Signature S20 speakers you see here back in summer last year, at the first outing of Denon and Marantz under their new ownership by US-based Sound United. The stable also includes three speaker brands – Boston, Definitive Technology and Polk Audio – and it was in the Polk Audio room at the event that I got a first listen to models from the company's Signature series, which seemed to have an interesting combination of style and a rather attractive sound. Selling for £299 a pair, the Signature S20s enter what is undoubtedly one of the more competitive sectors of the speaker market, inhabited by rivals such as the Wharfedale Diamond 11.1 reviewed in the December issue, plus lower-end models from the likes of Monitor Audio and Bowers & Wilkins.

Initial impressions are mixed. The speakers aren't as compact as some, standing around 35cm tall, but the narrow front baffles, curved detailing and the radiused corners to the 'black walnut' finished cabinet do a good job of disguising their size. However, there's some less-than-subtle branding on view once you remove the magnetically attached grilles: the mounting plate for the 25mm soft-dome tweeter bears the name of the manufacturer, 'Est. 1972' and the legend 'American HiFi'.

The mid/bass driver is a 16.5cm unit using a mica-reinforced polypropylene cone with a butyl rubber surround, and a 'motor' system built for power, combining a four-layer voice coil, ceramic magnets and suspension components designed to handle high temperatures. But it's to the rear of the speaker that things really get interesting. Along with a single pair of rather ordinary-looking speaker terminals, the S20 has a large plastic moulding that, were it to be metal, might lead one to think it was a heatsink for onboard amplification. No, this is a conventional passive speaker, and that structure is Polk's Power Port technology, which places a curved cone in the mouth of the reflex port opening, spreading the airflow by creating greater surface area. The idea is to reduce turbulence and the more obvious port effects, even when the speaker is mounted close to a wall, and the design also claims a 3dB increase in bass response over conventional port designs. In the larger floorstanding Signature models, the port fires downwards; here it's to the rear, with that assembly giving the speaker some breathing space even when hard against a wall. However, I'd advise giving the speakers some more distance from the wall for the most even tonal balance: they can sound a bit 'heavy' and slow with too much boundary reinforcement.

PERFORMANCE

Anyone not already scared off by Polk's description of the Signature range as 'The American HiFi Home Theater System' is in for a pleasant surprise when the S20 is set up and some music played. While these speakers aren't exactly shy or retiring in any way, there's something highly attractive about the vibrant, peppy way they go about playing everything from solo instruments to orchestral music. Yes, the bass is big and rich, but it's also fast and well able to cope with the rhythmic demands of enthusiastic playing, and the mid-band and treble integrate well to create a warm, attractive wash of sound that never sounds brash or overbright but instead offers impressive levels of insight into a performance.

The S20 is a relatively sensitive design at 88dB/W/m, and its impedance – described



POLK AUDIO SIGNATURE S20

Type Two-way bookshelf/standmount speakers

Drive units 25mm soft-dome tweeter, 16.5cm mica-loaded polypropylene mid/bass

Sensitivity 88dB/W/m

Impedance '8 ohm compatible'

Claimed frequency response 39Hz-40kHz

Recommended amplifier power 20-125W

Dimensions (WxHxD) 351x216x376cm

polkaudio.com

as 'compatible with 8 ohm outputs' – it doesn't seem to give even modest amplification a hard time. Having tried the speakers with everything from the low-output Quad VA-One valve amp (which falls short of the 20W minimum Polk suggests for the S20s but is fine as long as you don't want huge levels) right up to the powerful NAD C 388 reviewed last month, the overall impression is of a speaker with wide-ranging appeal.

Polk doesn't give much guidance about set-up beyond the usual equilateral triangle formed by the distance between the speakers and that to the listening position, and a suggestion that some toe-in may firm up the stereo image if the speakers need to be further apart. While a slight angle will improve focus, the wide-dispersion design makes this less critical than it is with some speakers more prone to beaming; indeed, the S20s sound fairly consistent even when listened to some way off axis, enhancing the impression of them as an easygoing design.

What little these speakers lack in ultimate refinement is more than repaid in the vitality with which they play music, and only their slight brightness when pushed hard suggests some care be taken with the choice of partnering amplification – but then, most price-comparable amps play things fairly safe, so won't agitate them unduly. As an alternative to the usual suspects in the £200-300 market sector, this example of 'American HiFi' is well worth sampling. **G**

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● **ESSAY**

Voicing an opinion

Is it only a matter of time before we all control our systems by talking to them, or is voice control more of a gimmick than a 'smart' future?

'Call home', I told my car, with total confidence. After all, I could do this with my phone in my pocket and without taking my eyes off the road to select a number on a touchscreen. After six attempts and multiple 'Command not recognised' responses, I gave up, pulled into the next lay-by and dialled the number myself, all the while rueing the Sunday morning I'd wasted 'training' the vehicle to recognise my spoken instructions.

It quite put me off the whole voice-control thing, to the extent that the latest car's voice-control has gone untested – life's just too short. And while such control systems have improved beyond all recognition, being able to recognise multiple voices and handle 'plain speech' instructions rather than a simple litany of pre-ordained phrases, the briefest surf around the internet reveals even the latest systems aren't without their failings.

You can smile at the YouTube video of a parrot telling a voice control device to turn on the lights, then apparently chuckling to itself when the room is suddenly brilliantly illuminated, or grimace at the little girl who asked her family's device to play with her and accidentally ordered an expensive doll's house from Amazon. That error was compounded when a local TV station reported on the occurrence, and viewers discovered their voice devices 'heard' the report and also ordered the same products.

Then there's the parent who reported that his toddler was now so conditioned to the 'tin of salmon'-shaped voice assistant that the child had taken to shouting orders at drinks coasters, and getting frustrated at the lack of response. Or my own experience of working at home with the radio on and the iPhone on my desk, and having the Siri system constantly responding to what it thinks is its trigger keywords.

Against that background, you may view it as a good thing or a bad one that the influence of Amazon's Alexa and Google's Assistant is seemingly spreading through the hi-fi world, with Apple set to expand Siri into the home audio arena at some point this year and others no doubt set



Thinking inside the box: a range of voice-controlled devices

to follow. However, some of the biggest names clearly think it's a good thing and major retailers are putting great faith in this 'smart home' or 'smart audio' technology, and encouraging consumers to invest heavily in compatible devices.

This isn't the first time I've looked at voice control in these pages but of late the implementation of the systems has increased to such an extent I thought it was sensible to take stock of where we're at – if, that is, one can keep up with all the announcements.

Voice-control systems have improved beyond all recognition but even the latest aren't without their failings

Of late we've seen brands such as Sonos and Yamaha hooking up with Amazon's Alexa system, and the likes of Bose and Sony with Google's Assistant, meaning that one can control various audio products with the voice control devices or even buy audio products with the technology built in. The Sonos One speaker has its own Alexa interface on board and it looks likely more products so equipped will emerge, while owners of existing Sonos speakers can control them with an Amazon Echo Dot 'puck' with the addition of what the online retailer calls a 'skill' – the equivalent of an app one can download to add functionality.

Similarly, the whole of the Yamaha MusicCast system is now Alexa-compatible, with the function added via a firmware update, meaning that the little Amazon device can control an entire multiroom system. Alexa also works with products from a number of other brands, including

Harman/Kardon, LG and Onkyo; and, with the system due to be added to various car brands, the possibility of having playlists and personalised libraries available in the home and on the road is becoming a reality. VAG group is rolling out Alexa starting with its Seat brand, and other manufacturers including Ford and Mercedes also have Alexa plans.

And while Bose is offering voice control on a variety of its products, the standout example is its latest QuietComfort headphones, the QC35 II, which have Google Assistant integration. This enables anyone with a smartphone to use their data allowance to stream online music to the headphones after calling it up with a voice command – as well as being able to do things such as asking for directions and other information.

Google Assistant is also supported by brands including JBL (part of the same stable as Harman/Kardon), Panasonic and Onkyo. And that support by Onkyo of both 'eco-systems' is perhaps indicative of how this whole voice-command world will develop. At the moment, it has all the makings of a new format war, with various brands having nailed their colours to the respective Amazon and Google masts, and of course with the potential for an Apple launch into this market to further muddy the waters, but things aren't quite that clear-cut.

Sonos, for example, may look like it's beating the drum for Amazon's Alexa but look a little closer at the headline announcement of its One speaker and Alexa support across its range, and you see the footnote that it plans also to support Google Home, starting from some point this year. That's an encouraging sign, and one hopefully to be repeated by other brands: maybe it won't be long before your system will respond differently according to the 'wake-up words' you use: say 'Alexa ...' and it will do one thing, call out 'Hey Google ...' and it will do another.

It seems even those of us accused of showing our age by shouting at the television or radio might have been on to something all along. ⑥

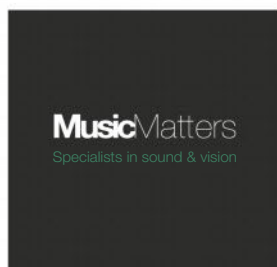
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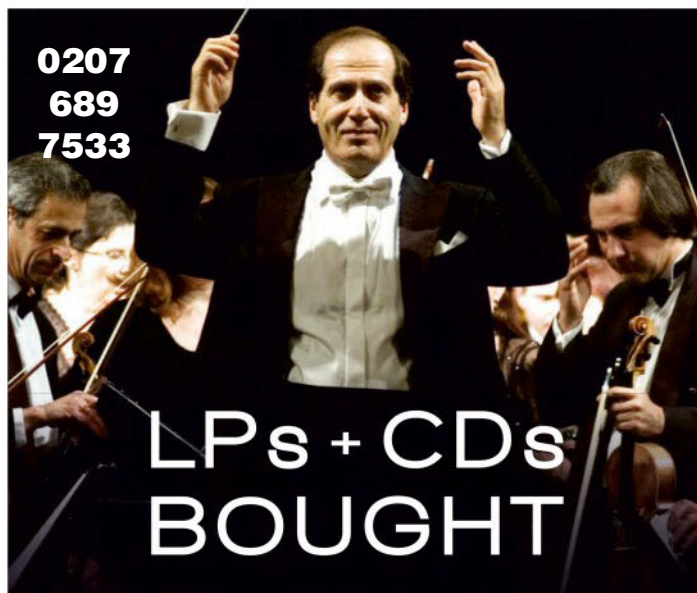
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NOTES & LETTERS

Interpreting Mahler's interpreters • Romantic Debussy • Theo Olof and Britten's Concerto

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Mahler's tempos

In his column, Edward Seckerson (January, page 13) starts a very unpredictable hare. On tempo and articulation, take, for example, the Mahler piano roll of the first movement of the Fifth Symphony. Make allowances for the weirdness of the machinery and its other eccentricities and you are still faced with very individual rhythmic articulation. Is he actually indicating how he would have expected an orchestra to make the notes sound and relate to each other? If he is, then sometimes at least, the closest of his followers would have to be that same Otto Klemperer, perhaps, though we have no record of how he would have launched the Fifth.

Then there is the *Andante comodo* of the first movement of the Ninth. Surely Bruno Walter would have got it right at the premiere? But of all tempo markings, 'andante' is, if not the most ambiguous, a strong contender. Arturo Toscanini is on record as declaring 'andante e camminare [walking]', and also offering an extreme demonstration of this with the second movement of Mozart's E flat Symphony (No 39), which these days seems gradually to be getting less extreme. Mahler was an almost lifelong serious walker, and some have even researched his walking style, which seems to have been rather individual. A performance conducted by Hermann Scherchen in around 1950 seems to have taken Toscanini at his word. I heard it the other day, for the first time, and Mahler the vigorous pedestrian sprang to life – the farewell is one to his younger self, and not in the least self-pitying. That tempo is enough to make one rethink the whole work.

And then there is Mahler's Fourth Symphony, which we know Mahler and Mengelberg each conducted, one after the other, in the same concert, and we know that Mahler said he actually preferred Mengelberg's performance to his own. What we would probably describe as Mengelberg's nuances are evident in his 1939 recording. Would that have been how Mahler wanted it?

It's a great pity that Edward Seckerson reached the bottom of the page where he did. Surely this is a discussion that needs following up ...

Jim Brennan, by email

Letter of the Month



Dmitri Hvorostovsky as Eugene Onegin at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in December 2015

Paying tribute to a great Russian baritone

So Dmitri Hvorostovsky, the great Siberian baritone, is dead at 55 (For the Record, January, page 8), after battling for two-and-a-half years with brain cancer. What an immense loss this is to our musical world.

The countless roles he graced left a legacy to all fortunate enough to have heard them. Opinions and tastes of course run the gamut and are myriad. Regardless, what remains paramount for me personally is the spectacular presence this opera singer

created as the callous Eugene Onegin in Tchaikovsky's opera based on Pushkin's novel.

I read sections of the Pushkin nightly and am forever reminded why it has been the superb Russian masterpiece it has been for eons. One can't imagine a finer fit than Hvorostovsky in that role.

Dmitri, thanks for the memories. Now, please enjoy your endless encore. Bravo!

*Leon J Hoffmann
Chicago, IL, USA*

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**PRESTO
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Speedy Debussy?

I was so disappointed to read Harriet Smith's review of Stephen Hough's wonderful new Debussy CD (January, page 64). She seems to favour fast, bright Debussy over a more romantic approach.

We should never forget that Debussy composed on an upright piano covered with blankets. He didn't like bright, virtuoso playing of his music. I heard Mr Hough on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune*

telling of a backstage conversation with a pianist in Paris in the 1950s. 'My father said everyone plays *L'isle joyeux* too fast,' said an elderly lady to the pianist. 'Who was your father?' he asked. 'Claude Debussy.' *John Kawasaki, by email*

Theo Olof and Britten

I read with interest your Classics Reconsidered (December, page 126) about the Concertgebouw recording

of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* conducted by Kirill Kondrashin with its Concertmaster Herman Krebbers. On the photo on page 127 you see on the left of Kondrashin the other concertmaster, Theo Olof (1924-2012).

Theo Olof, who was also concertmaster of The Hague Philharmonic, wrote several books about music and in his first, *Daar sta je dan* (1958), he mentions he had a lot of concert tours in England after the war. He studied the Violin Concerto by Benjamin Britten and played the work at the Cheltenham Festival on July 2, 1947. Britten was satisfied and after the concert Olof also met Alan Rawsthorne who mentioned he had rewritten his

Violin Concerto because the first version was burned in the war. He asked Olof if he was interested to play it. This happened at the next year's festival. With these two concertos (Britten and Rawsthorne) Theo Olof gave concerts throughout the whole of the UK.

The Britten concerto was also recorded by Olof with the Hallé Orchestra and Sir John Barbirolli for HMV. Barbirolli, HMV and Olof approved the recording but Britten was not satisfied because he considered the orchestra too loud. There was no possibility to correct it – so no recording.

Aart Hoekstra
The Netherlands

OBITUARIES

A legendary US violinist who also taught, conducted and composed



ROBERT MANN

Violinist, teacher, conductor and composer

Born July 19, 1920

Died January 1, 2018

The founding violinist of the Juilliard Quartet, Robert Mann has died at the age of 97. He led the quartet for 50 years.

Born in Oregon, Mann studied with the leader of the Portland Symphony Orchestra, Edouard Hurlimann, and played in the Portland Youth Philharmonic. Aged 18, he moved to New York to study at the Juilliard School, working with Édouard Dethier (violin), Bernard Wagenaar and Stefan Wolpe (composition), and Edgar Schenkman (conducting). In 1941 he won the Naumburg Competition and later that year made his New York debut; then, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, he was drafted into the US Army.

In 1946, William Schuman, Juilliard's President, invited Mann to form a quartet and, taking its name from the music school, the Juilliard Quartet was founded. Mann played first violin with the ensemble in approximately

5000 concerts, performing more than 600 works, including some 100 premieres – contemporary music was always a central focus of the group. The Juilliard's discography, for CBS (now Sony Classical) and RCA was extensive, embracing more than 100 compositions. They recorded the Bartók quartets three times, the 1963 cycle (for CBS) being generally considered the finest. As a solo violinist he recorded the Beethoven sonatas (with Stephen Hough for ASV), Mozart violin sonatas with Yefim Bronfman (Musicmasters), sonatas by Bartók (Bartók Records) and Elliott Carter's Duo with the pianist Christopher Oldfather (Sony Classical).

As a teacher, Mann mentored numerous young string quartets including the Alexander, American, Colorado, Concord, Emerson, New World, Mendelssohn, Tokyo, Brentano, Lark, and St Lawrence quartets. He also taught solo violinists at Juilliard.

He was a composer, too, and many of his works were taken up by distinguished performers: his *Orchestral Fantasy* was performed by both the New York and Vienna Philharmonics, his Duo for violin and piano was performed by Itzhak Perlman and Samuel Sanders, his *Dreamtime* by David Aaron Carpenter and a string quartet by the LaSalle Quartet.

Mann also conducted throughout his career: he worked with the New York Chamber Symphony, MSM Symphony, Boston SO and Seattle SO and ensembles at various US music festivals including Aspen, Ravinia and Tanglewood. In addition, he worked at Seiji Ozawa's Saito Kinen Music Festival in Japan as a conductor, teacher and soloist.

NEXT MONTH MARCH 2018



Marking Debussy's legacy, 100 years on

To celebrate the centenary of the French composer's death,

Mark Pullinger speaks to some major interpreters to pinpoint the contribution Debussy made to music in the 20th century and beyond

Andrew Manze on Vaughan Williams

Richard Bratby catches up with the conductor as he records Symphonies Nos 5 and 6, part of his ongoing cycle with the RLPO

Don Giovanni

Richard Lawrence listens to available recordings of Mozart's classic opera and chooses the best

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Bach, JS Opus magnum, Vol 2: Transcrs. *Nebel.* ⑆ **HC17075**

Glinka Songs. *Sukmanova, J & E.* ⑆ **HC17068**

Haydn Sym Nos 93-104. *Heidelberg SO/Fey.* ⑆ ④ **HC16001**

Schumann Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 11. *Uhlig.* ⑆ **HC17037**

Various Cpsrs Season. *Lalá Voc Ens.* ⑆ **HC17081**

HARMONIA MUNDI

Bach, JS Sons for Vn & Hpd. *Faust/Bezuidenhout.* ⑆ ② **HMM90 2256/7**

Debussy Cpte Pf Wks (r2000-06). *Planès.* ⑤ ⑤ ④ **HMX295 8209/13**

Dvořák 'American' Stg Qnt. Stg Sextet. *Jerusalem Qt/Hagen, V/Hoffmann, G.* ⑆ **HMM90 2320**

Mozart Requiem (compl Dutron). *Sols/Freiburg Baroque Orch/Jacobs.* ⑆ ④ **HMM33 2291**

Schubert Winterreise. *Padmore/Bezuidenhout.* ⑆ **HMM90 2264**

HERITAGE

Debussy, Janáček, Respighi Vn Sons. *Ueda/Rinaldo.* ⑆ **HTGCD190**

Ullmann Pf Sons Nos 1-3. 'Schoenberg' Vars. *Garzón.* ⑆ **HTGCD189**

Various Cpsrs British Celebration, Vol 2. *Royal Ballet Sinf/Sutherland/BBC Concert Orch/Wordsworth.* ⑆ **HTGCD192**

Various Cpsrs British Concertante. *Various artists.* ⑓ **HTGCD191**

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Debussy Songs, Vol 4. <i>Crowe/Martineau.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ CDA68075
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Stravinsky Rite of Spring. Wks for Two Pfs. <i>Hamelin/Andsnes.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ CDA68189

JOHN WILLIAMS	
Goss Flower of Cities Houghton Light on the Edge. <i>John Williams/Ens.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ JCW5
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Mozart Pf Conc No 20 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2 (pp2011/09). <i>Ciccolini/LPO/Nézet-Séguin.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ LPO0102

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Rimsky-Korsakov Sheherazade Stravinsky Petrushka (r2003/07). <i>Tchaikovsky SO/Fedoseyev.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ MELCD100 2508

MÉTIER	<i>divine-art.co.uk</i>
Fox Headlong - Wks for Cl. <i>Roche.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ MSV28573

MYRIOS	<i>myriosmusic.com</i>
Schumann. Widmann Es war einmal <i>Widmann, J/ Zimmermann, T/Várjon.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ MYR020

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Vivaldi Dorilla in Tempe. <i>Sols incl Basso, De Liso & Prina/ Barocchisti/Fasolis.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ OP30560

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Glass Stg Qts Nos 6 & 7. <i>Brooklyn Rider.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ OMMO121

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Mozart Così fan tutte (pp1978). <i>Sols incl Price, Fassbaender & Schreier/Bavarian St Op/Sawallisch.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ C918 1821

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Schubert Schöne Müllerin (1951). <i>Fischer-Dieskau/Moore.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ RRC1383
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Schubert Winterreise (r1955). <i>Fischer-Dieskau/Moore.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ RRC1400
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Beethoven Syms Nos 4 & 5 (pp2017). <i>Vienna SO/Jordan, P.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ WS014

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Schubert Pf Son No 21. <i>Entremont.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ SM276

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Rubbra Syms Nos 2 & 4 (bp1954/pp1942). <i>BBC SO/Boult/ Rubbra.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ SOMMCD0179

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Bruce. Matheson. Schumann Windows - Pf Wks. <i>Levingston.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ DSL92218

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Scherber Sym No 1. <i>Bratislava SO/Adriano.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ CDS1113

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Bruckner Sym No 9 (pp1996). <i>SWR SO, Stuttgart/Giulini.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ SWR19411CD

Czerny Syms Nos 2 & 6. <i>SWR Rad Orch, Kaiserslauten/Nowak.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ SWR19419CD
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Suk Asrael (r1967). <i>SWF Orch, Baden-Baden/Ançerl.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ SWR19055CD
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Various Cpsrs Pf Wks (pp1953). <i>Haskil.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ SWR19052CD
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Various Cpsrs Kreuzungen, Vol 13. <i>Ens Musikfabrik/Pomàrica/ Rundel/Poppe.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ WER6866-2
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Walsh, M ... and the Greatest of these is Love. <i>Antiphon Ch & Plyrs/Cann.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ WHR049
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WIGMORE HALL LIVE	<i>wigmore-hall.org.uk/live</i>
Beethoven Stg Qts, Vol 4 (pp2014). <i>Elias Qt.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ WHLIVE0089

Various Cpsrs Songs of Vain Glory (pp2014). <i>Bevan, S/Wybrew.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ WHLIVE0090
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WINTER & WINTER	<i>winterandwinter.com</i>
Abrahamsen Stg Qts Nos 1-4. <i>Arditti Qt.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ 910 242-2

Telemann At Café Zimmermann. <i>Freitagsakademie.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ 910 245-2
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Various Cpsrs South America. <i>Lysy, A & A.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ YAR80167
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DVD & BLU-RAY

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Mahler Sym No 1 (pp2015). <i>Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch/Chailly.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ ACC20335; ACC10335

BELVEDERE	<i>belvedere-edition.com</i>
Brahms Syms Nos 1-3 (pp2014). <i>Cleveland Orch/Welser-Möst.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ BVE08007; BVE08011
Wagner Feen. <i>Sols/Vienna St Op.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ BVE10129

CMajor ENTERTAINMENT	
Verdi Forza del destino (pp2008). <i>Sols incl Álvarez, Stemme & Licitra/Vienna St Op/Mehta.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ 751008; 751104

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Giordano Fedora (pp2015). <i>Sols incl Dessi/Carlo Felice Th, Genoa/Galli.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ 37772; 57772

FARAO	<i>farao-classics.de</i>
Mozart Zauberflöte. <i>Sols/Orch Klangverwaltung/Guttenberg.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ D108094; A108095

MÉTIER	<i>divine-art.co.uk</i>
Hughes Symphonic Visions. <i>Orch of Sound & Light/Hughes.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ MSVDX103

NAXOS	<i>naxos.com</i>
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Various Cpsrs Live from the BBC Proms (pp2016). <i>Abduraimov/ Petrenko, A/Munich PO/Gergiev.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ 2 110572; NBD0073V
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OPUS ARTE	
Tchaikovsky Sleeping Beauty. <i>Orch of the ROH/Kessels.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ OA1257D; OABD7234D

WERGO	<i>wergo.de</i>
Stockhausen Strahlen. <i>Hudacsek.</i>	Ⓢ Ⓣ WER2075-5

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Joanna David

The actor on how studying ballet as a teenager led to a life-long love of music

I started ballet lessons when I was about three and went on training more seriously as a Royal Academy of Dance scholar, and then went to Elmhurst Ballet School when I was 12 and stayed there until I was 16. I was hopeless in the 1960s when pop music was everything and I just didn't really have an ear for it because I was so steeped in classical music! You're trained with such an ear to listen acutely to music because you have to dance to it – even when you're doing your actual exercises at the barre in a studio you're still listening acutely to music and I'm very, very lucky that I had that as part of my upbringing.

In the early '70s I went to a little arts festival at a place called Upottery in Devon, where the actress Penelope Lee had been left a house by an aunt and she'd decided to have an arts festival. And, believe it or not, at this festival Murray Perahia was performing, and Jacqueline du Pré, who had just lost her ability to play, was doing *With Great Pleasure*, the BBC choice of prose and poetry which was being recorded there, and Moray Welsh the cellist who was a great friend of hers was there too.

Jacqueline and I became friends. She used to like listening to her recordings with you when you would go to have supper with her, and I used to take my daughter Emilia and she would listen too. I'm passionate about Jacqueline's music, and luckily the cello repertoire isn't quite as vast as others so I must have listened to as many recordings as I possibly could.

I was on location in Hungary making a film of *Anna Karenina* in the '80s. My daughter came out to see me and I took her to the newly restored opera house in Budapest where there was a children's performance on a Saturday morning of *Madam Butterfly* and one of *La bohème*, so I was able to introduce her to the opera at 11. They had so many concerts at the Franz Liszt Academy and so I used to go to hear Dezső Ránki and Zoltán Kocsis playing in their very early days.

I went to hear my husband [Edward Fox] read the *Four Quartets* by TS Eliot – this was about 15 years ago – and Lucy Parham was in the audience, and we started to talk and really had a rapport. She'd just done a performance of Clara and Robert Schumann at the Wigmore Hall with words and music, and she was giving another concert in the quite near future and asked me if I would consider doing it. I was thrilled, because I'm ashamed to say I knew so little about Robert and Clara's Schumann's life, and it was a revelation. Lucy is a wonderful, wonderful concert pianist, and she has taught me so much about the composers. We try and make it not just two actors standing up and spouting and then sitting down and then the pianist gets going – we try and make it like a trio, so that it goes from one to the other seamlessly.



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The incredible music that these three great musicians made together – I just think it's life-giving. I particularly love the Piano Trio No 5 in D.

Lucy researches these composers to the most remarkable degree, and we use a lot of letters, so you are speaking from the individual composer's hearts. I've been very lucky to do the Liszt programme. My favourite piece in that is *Sancta Dorothea*, which is just so inspiring, it makes me have goose bumps. You know more about the music because you listen to it over and over again – and I think that's the thing about music, the more you hear – a bit like reading Shakespeare – the more you get from it every time.

My husband is a passionate lover of music and it is thanks to him and his influence that I've heard the recordings of Schnabel, Heifetz, the Busch Quartet, Casals, Rubinstein and all the great artists. I feel very lucky to have had that kind of musical education.

Another incredible experience a few months ago was hearing Murray Perahia rehearse the Beethoven concerto cycle that he's doing all over Europe. It was an absolute thrill to see how he was conducting the orchestra from the keyboard, and what an inference he can make with one note to them, and then you listen and hear it – that was an eye opener. **G**

Joanna David performs in 'Odyssey of Love: Liszt and his Women' alongside Robert Glenister and Lucy Parham at St John's Smith Square, London on March 4.

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